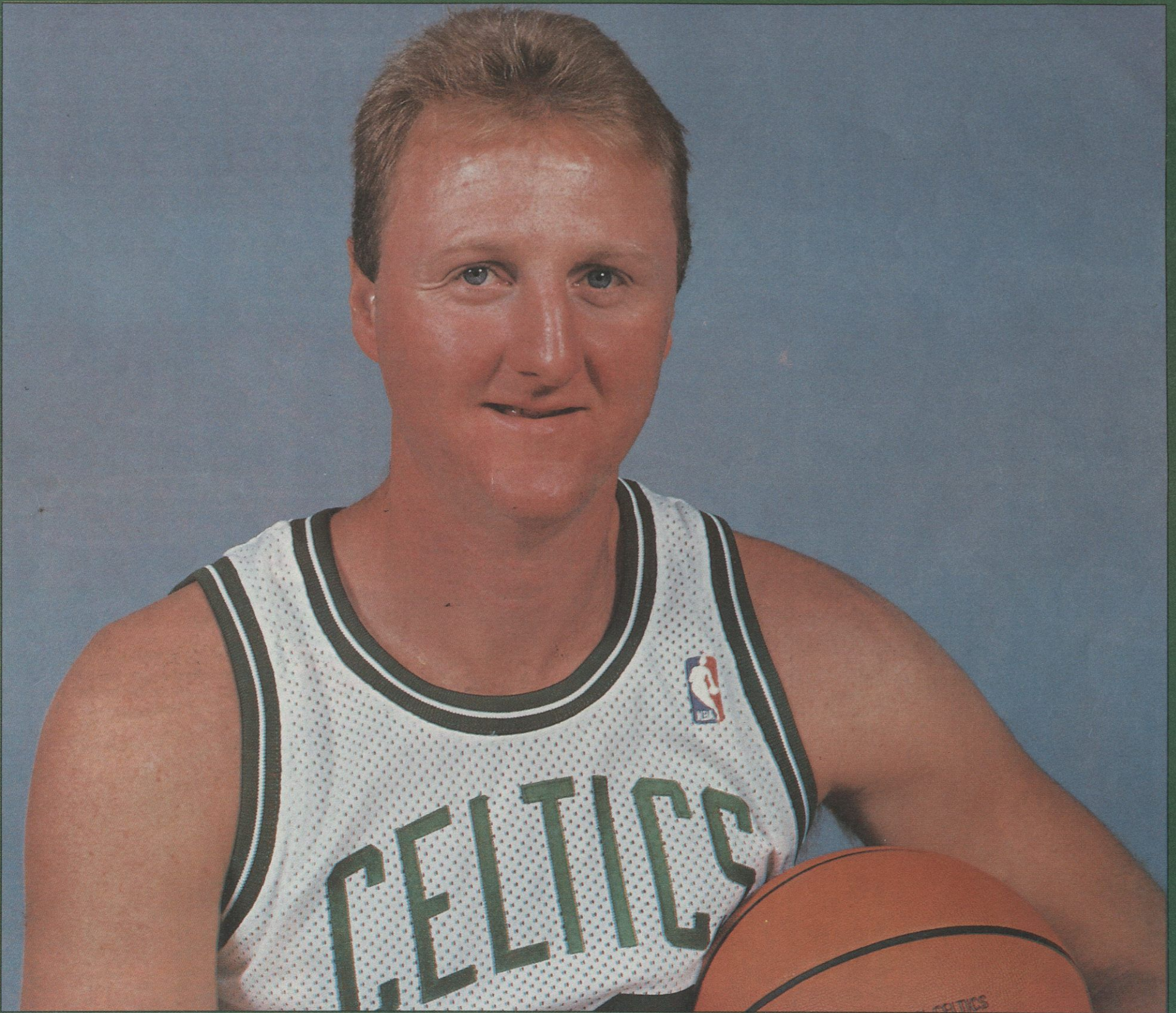


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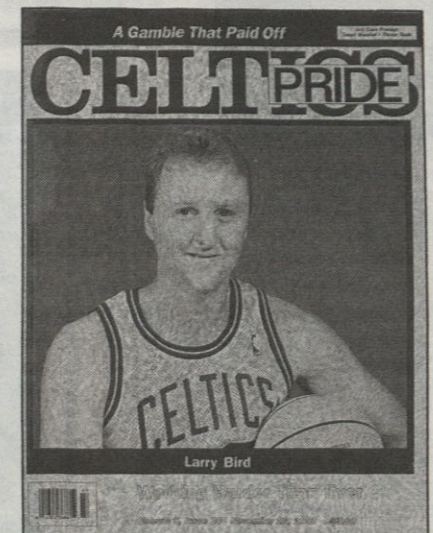
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CELTICS PRIDE

Volume 5 Issue 20
Number 100
November 23, 1990



Cover.....

7 Larry's Working Harder Than Ever

When you get done totaling all his NBA accomplishments is arguably the best to ever the game. Despite his superstardom, Bird remains one thing... simply Larry Bird, homespun and hardworking. Cover photography by Steve Lipofsky.

Features.....

8 Looking For A Fresh Start

From the moment Red Auerbach prophesied that Michael Smith "plays a lot like Larry," Smith's future in the NBA was changed for all time. Smith is waiting to show everyone that Red's initial impressions were not that far off. Michael is hungry to prove himself this season and this could be the year he gets his chance.

18... Kevin "The Slasher" Gamble

After impressing both players and coaches throughout preseason, it looks like Kevin Gamble is going to see a lot of action this year. Coach Ford likes what he sees in Gamble and Kevin is grateful to be back in the rotation.

Departments.....

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All photography in this magazine is shot on Kodak film.

Sound Off.....

Which Green Is Most Important?

Dear Soundoff,

What is wrong with Celtic's management? All this talk about pride, commitment and will to win—all the players are worried about is money.

How could they even consider renegotiating with a player who runs their name through the papers, and takes them to Court just so that he might be able to make an extra buck somewhere else. Brian Shaw should have to accept less money and crawl back begging. He hasn't even proven that he can play in the NBA.

Then Reggie Lewis who states, "I will not even consider negotiating with the Celtics. I'll play elsewhere." ends up signing one of the best deals in the NBA. "The highest paid player aside from a few centers," says his agent.

The Celtics, who have this season to worry about, take the time to renegotiate a contract that doesn't even expire for another year. Larry Bird had a tougher time trying to renegotiate. I guess he used the wrong tactics. He should have said something insulting about the organization.

Reggie Lewis is in his third season. Never an All Star, never all NBA anything, he didn't even lead his own team in any statistical category last year. How does he deserve one of the biggest deals in the league?

His numbers last year were:

Games 79; 49.6; FT% 80.8; 3PT% 26.6; RPG 4.39; APG 2.85; ST 88; Blk 63; and PPG 17.0. Compare these to Larry Bird's third year numbers: Games 82; FG% 50.3; FT% 86.3; 3PT% 21.2; RPG 10.9; APG 5.8; ST 143; Blk 66; and PPG 22.9. Larry was already a 3 time All Star, 3 time all NBA First Team, Rookie of the Year, and Runner up for the MVP. Was Larry's contract renegotiated? Was he worried about becoming one of the highest paid players in the league? Reggie Lewis is not the next Larry Bird. And even with renegotiating, and salaries are going up, he is being paid comparatively better at this stage in his career.

I'm starting to believe the Celtic's Mystique has been replaced by Celtic's Mistakes. If Brian Shaw and Reggie Lewis are the Future of the Celtics then the Celtics have no future.

Why don't the Celtics do us all a favor and make the ultimate mistake and trade Larry to a team with a PRESENT so that he can finish his career in style and remain the champion that he always will be.

Christy Sanford

A Confused Celtics Fan from Jackson, Ohio

Basketball is not just a game anymore, it's a big business. Sometimes, business negotiations can become very heated. Things that aren't really meant, can be spoken in the heat of battle. After the two sides have settled, comments are usually retracted

and apologized for. As for Brian Shaw and Reggie Lewis, they are just trying to secure their financial futures. Sporting careers can be over in an instant due to injury. As for the future, Shaw and Lewis are capable of all-star seasons, and the Celtics feel that they are a strong foundation for the future. Let's give them a chance.

Most Will Be Missed

Dear Sound Off,

For over twenty five years I have been a Celtic "nut" and have had the opportunity in more recent years to have seen then play, both in Landover, Maryland and the "Garden" on numerous occasions. Since I am from Petersburg, VA, and far removed from seeing them play regularly and reading about them, you may wonder how my loyalty began.

It's simple! While in high school, I started listening to Johnny Most on WBZ radio and have listened to as many broadcasts as possible since.

As a result, I have acquired a deep respect for Johnny and his enthusiasm, professionalism, knowledge and genuine dedication both to the Celtics organization, the players, and the fans!

After having recently read of Johnny's retirement from the broadcast booth, I felt compelled to express my feelings.

Johnny, on behalf of all of your fans, thanks for your fresh commentary and for being the true professional that you are. You will be missed.

Phil Spencer
Petersburg, VA

Ticket Info

Dear Sound Off,

I need help!

I have been a life-long Celtic fanatic and have always dreamed of seeing the Celtics play at the Garden. I am getting married on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1991, and would love to see the Celtics play as a part of my honeymoon vacation. Are the Celtics at home on March 18 or 19? How can I get tickets? Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Thomas Kelly
Sicklerville, NJ

Congratulations, and good luck with your marriage! Celtics Pride is sorry to inform you that the Celtics will not be home on March 18th or 19th, but they will be home March 20, against the Washington Bullets. To receive tickets you must call the Celtics charge line (1-800-382-8080). Don't waste time or they will be sold out!

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November 23, 1990



By Dave Gavitt

View From The Top

The Regular Season Is Finally Underway

All things considered, I'm just glad that the regular season is finally underway.

Since we opened training camp on October 6, I think the question I've been asked most is whether or not I've had any second thoughts over having taken the Celtics' job, given "all the problems" the team experienced during the off-season.

Thinking about it, to be quite honest, none of what happened ever really bothered me that much. I don't feel that I've ever been one who has shied away from trying to solve problems. And, in the case of the events of this summer, what helped me put things into perspective throughout was my concentration on the two real key dates on our schedule — October 6 and November 2.

Since arriving in Boston more than five months ago, I knew that my first really big priority would be getting everyone we wanted to take a look at under contract by the start of training camp on October 6, which was accomplished. The second major concern I had was to see to it that we had the best team possible on the floor and on the bench for the season opener on November 2, and I think we did alright on that front as well. So, in the final analysis, and regardless of any problems we might have encountered along the way, I believe the end results have been quite satisfactory.

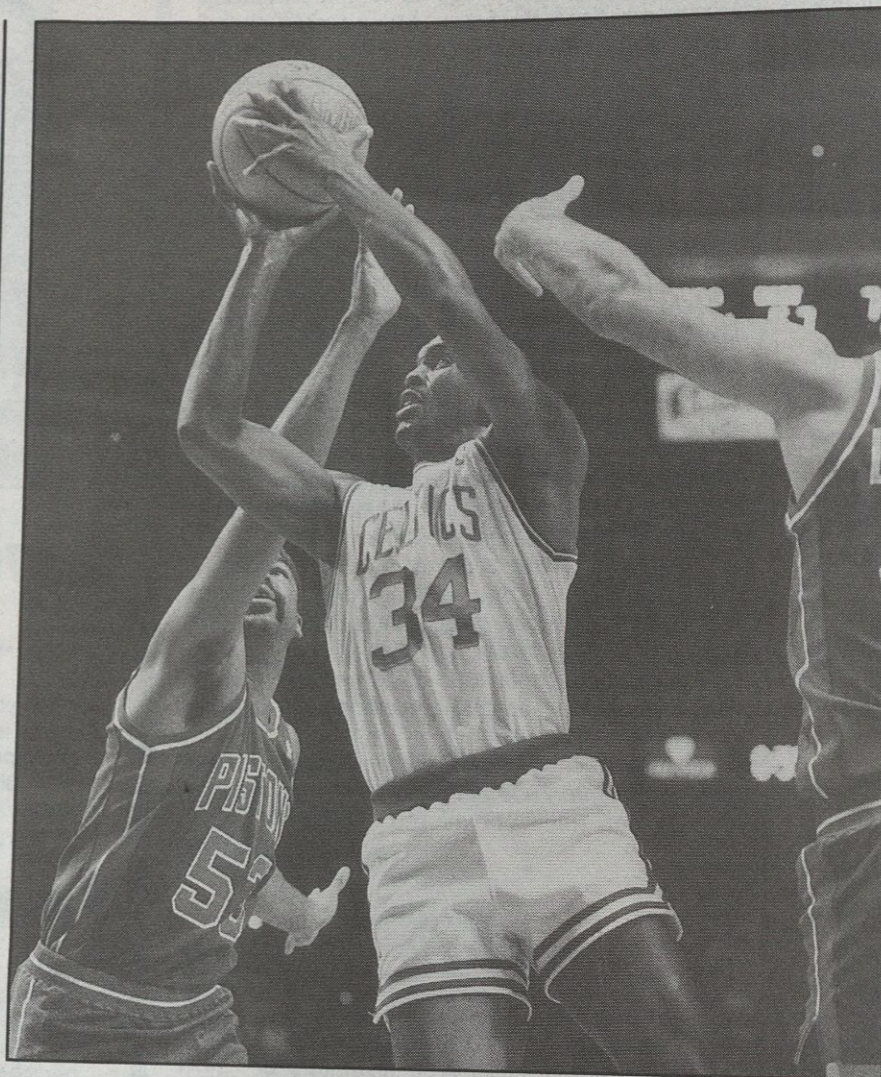
The first thing that struck me when I became a part of the Celtics organization was the absolute dedication they have to winning here. My job, therefore, is pretty clearly defined — I'm here to provide Chris Ford and his coaches with every piece of weaponry they need to succeed.

Obviously, we have a tradition of winning, both in the distant past and in recent history, so I never felt that there was a need to tear everything down and start from scratch. In my mind, the best approach was the one we took, maintaining the strength of our nucleus and building in the right direction around it.

The first thing the coaches and I wanted to accomplish was to set up as competitive a situation as we could at the rookie/free agent camp in July and at the Veteran's camp in October, and I think we did an excellent job in that regard. Considering the results, I think it's fair to say that this approach helped push most of our players, especially guys like Kevin Gamble and Mike Smith, who really rose to the challenge and improved their games in the process.

Evaluating last year's team, it was not difficult to recognize that there were certain weaknesses that had to be addressed. The most pressing of these, of course, was the overall lack of team speed, but almost as essential was the need to sure up our backcourt. In my opinion, we succeeded here in killing two birds with one stone.

Dee Brown and Brian Shaw obviously bring the long awaited speed and athleticism to the point guard position. So far, they both have done an excellent job of handling everything that's been asked of them, and I would expect to watch each of them continue to come into their own as



Kevin Gamble has elevated his game as much as any member of the team.

the season progresses.

Reggie Lewis has proven to be a great scorer at this level over the last few years, and he's now quickly becoming a terrific all-around player. Then there's Kevin Gamble, who has elevated his game as much as any member of this team during the pre-season. Every indication given by Kevin so far is that he's going to be a valuable scoring threat for us almost anytime he's on the floor. I think anyone would agree that we've got the makings for a pretty strong four guard rotation here. From

these four players, we get speed, quickness, scoring ability, ball handling and solid defense.

Up front, we've got most of that strong nucleus I spoke of earlier, with Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Robert Parish — who still combine to form one of the very best frontcourts in the NBA and who, individually, continue to rank among the league's elite at their respective positions — along with capable support players in Joe Kleine, Mike Smith and Ed Pinckney — each of whom offers their own variety of skills to

the team.

Of course, it has been pointed out that we could still use a defensive specialist of sorts at the small forward position, someone who could be used to help slow down guys like Dominique Wilkins, Charles Barkley and Chuck Person, who've hurt us in the past. We had hoped that Eric McArthur would fill this need, but it became clear at veterans' camp that he was not yet ready for this type of role. And, while there have been conversations with other teams in the league about a possible deal, there is nothing I can comment on at this time.

However, I should state here that I really do have all the confidence in the world in Chris Ford and his two assistant coaches to make the best use of whatever personnel they're dealt. With each passing day, I gain more respect for Chris' abilities as a Head Coach. He's both a hard worker and an excellent communicator, and I truly admire his ability to be direct and single-minded with the players without being so demanding that he creates an adversarial relationship with them. Right now, I have every reason to believe that the players will do whatever he wants them to, and I'd be willing to bet that they'll do it enthusiastically, as well.

On top of this, I think Chris has a very good feel for the game. As a bench coach, I would doubt very seriously that he would want to play every game by the book. My best guess is that he'll make moves depending on what his gut tells him at any given time, and that, over the course of 82 games, he will never be real predictable in respect to the substitutions he makes and the combinations he might put out there on the floor.

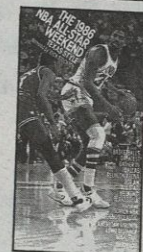
Another question I find myself answering a lot these days is in regards to the importance of getting off to a fast start. My response to this is, sure, I think it's important to get off on an up note. We've made a lot of changes in the game plan and it would be a real benefit to gain the players' confidence right off the bat, but, by the same token, all of us in the organization have to remember that with a new coaching staff, a new system and new players at key positions, not to mention the fact that we're playing Cleveland, New York, Chicago and Chicago in our first four games, we've got to be realistic.

I think what is most important for the players, coaches and management is to remember all that has changed, and bear it in mind in order to guard against getting down should everything not go as well as we hope it will. After all, everyone knows that our goal headed into this season is to be better tomorrow than we were today, and to be very good come May and June when we'll be looking to win 15 games.

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CELTICS PRIDE

Color It Green

Autumn In New England Brings Optimism

By Jim Bianchine

There is a new freshness in the crisp Autumn air of New England this year for the first time since the Boston Celtics date in the NBA Finals was as predictable as politician's Election Day promises.

Not since 1986 has the staid Bostonian attitude toward their darlings in green shorts been so optimistic. The products of the puritan ethic, old Yankee blue bloods if you will, could be in for a treat this season.

The Celtics' style fit the region perfectly. Each year was like opening to the first page of the novel, The Last Hurrah, an appropriate story this time of year about an old-style Boston politician in his final campaign.

The 1989-90 season that ended all too soon for the Boston Celtics in the first round of the NBA playoffs could have been a final salute or last hurrah to a style of basketball that had its day in the sun three times. Its results wave proudly from the Boston Garden rafters.

On the other coast, where "surfs up" is a battle cry and everybody in flowered shirts are far out dudes, there is a different kind of basketball played, one that keeps the sneaker industry in the black the way they run-and-gun and wear out treads.

Tempo seems to be the call word for success. Running is the new formula for winning in the 1990's and the Celtics, pride sullied in their old style since 1986, now have the personnel to play a brand of ball the same as so many teams have tried to play against them in recent years. It isn't a state secret the Celtics are getting a little long in the tooth.

Through eight exhibition games and a win against the World Champion Detroit Pistons, the jewel of their six victories isn't the measuring stick you want to go out and bet the mortgage on, there appears reason to get excited about the Celts' possible return to membership in the league's high-brow club.

Stuffy traditionalist basketball appears to be ready to give way to new-age hoop, but change will not come easy. The Celtics were well aware of the fact that many young teams caught up with them and they must now go out and regain respect, and more running seems to be the only answer.

But, things don't just happen overnight. Changing the tempo from a Viennese Waltz to White Snake will take more than a little leprechaun magic. All the ghosts of Celtics past that haunt the hallowed halls of the Boston Garden won't help. It is going to take patience and perseverance, and of course, the right personnel which they appear to have in the backcourt and off the glass where everything really starts.

In the past, the Celtics' offense lacked movement. The new tempo should change that, as will their ability to keep up with teams they haven't been.

In professional basketball, it's the lack of speed that kills. The lumbering, walk-it-up halfcourt style of so many seasons produced some negative results, as well as great successes. Last season the Celtics had the league's worst turnover differential because, frankly, they were just too slow.

These same plodders forced the fewest turnovers in the league and made the second fewest steals. For true success, beyond 52 wins and one round in the

playoffs, those figures must change, and with the running style coach Chris Ford hopes to employ, should rather dramatically.

Another reason for optimism, however guarded at this point, is the Celtics' ability to dramatically change faces throughout the course of any game. They can be chameleon-like with their ability to spring the fast break, or revert to their halfcourt, pound it down your throat inside style, since one of the most devastating frontlines ever assembled in Larry Bird, Robert Parish and Kevin McHale is hardly ready for custom-made rocking chairs.

A seemingly new ability to now be able to run with the rest of the league or at least most teams, thanks to the infusion of new legs in the backcourt with Brian Shaw and rookie Dee Brown, looks great on the coach's chalkboard and in the better part of eight exhibition games.

The new idea is great. But, the ability to pull it off over 82 games and into the playoffs depends on more than just two darting guards and three veteran frontliners fortitude and willingness to accept a dramatically new approach.

Over the past four seasons, depth, or in Boston's case, the lack of it, has been a killer, as lethal as the bite of the cobra. Once in desperate need of guard help, desperate enough to deal fair-haired boy Danny Ainge, the Celtics suddenly seem guard-rich.

Once in dire need of backup help for the ageless Chief, the Celtics are in fine shape with the incredible bulk, Joe Kleine, who provides this team exactly what it needs with little fanfare.

As I see it, the team's fate hangs in the balance and directly falls on the shoulders of the people that are set to fill the shoes of the forwards when Bird and McHale are weary. For this team to go beyond good and regain a little of its past greatness, they must get consistent play from the backup forwards, namely Ed Pinckney and Michael Smith.

At this point, that is the grave area of concern. Neither have shown they can perform up to the task night in and night out the way they must for the Celtics to again rub elbows with the elite.

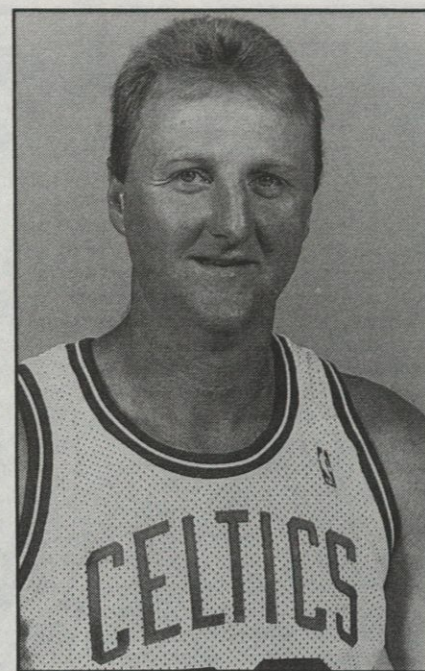
For starters, Smith is slow. How will his plow horse style fit in with the stallions? He's had his moments, but will shine for a few games and then disappear for a while.

Pinckney has been a mystery since his glory days at Villanova and the memorable NCAA final showdown battle with Georgetown and Pat Ewing. Many felt his style was best suited for the running game, filling the lanes on the break. The Phoenix Suns and the Sacramento Kings gave him every opportunity in that brand of basketball before he came to Boston, and he did relatively little by NBA standards in either place.

Though it's tough to start pointing fingers already, the Celtics have to get good backup play from both to effectively make the wholesale change they hope to do.

It will take time for the Celtics' fast-break to resemble the Bolshoi Ballet, but the key to its success could be the play of these two when Bird and McHale wear down.

There appears to be a vicious three-team fight for first-place in the Atlantic Division in the making between the Celtics,



Bird will know where to be on the fast-break.

Philadelphia and New York. One thing that has always stuck in my craw — apologies to the Celtics loyalists of Connecticut — is the Celtics' so-called "home away from home," the Hartford Civic Centre where they annually play three home games. When the season winds down to the wire with the three bunched up down the home stretch, each game counts heavily in the standings. Simple mathematics shows they are three games the Celtics will not have the advantage of playing on the parquet. The Red Sox don't play three home games in Philadelphia. The Yankees don't play three home games in Pittsburgh. Get my drift?

A little food for thought on the subject. Last season the Celtics fell one game short of winning the Atlantic Division. They did not win all three games in Hartford. Is the beautiful Civic Centre really that much of a homecourt advantage or more of a neutral site? You make the call.

Regardless of how you feel on the subject, those games are written in stone through the 1992-93 season at the present time.

While on the subject, the Celtics also have to reestablish home rule at the Boston Garden, a place teams feared. They must again make the decaying old place a temple of doom like the old days to the Clippers and Warriors of the world.

Though there are those that worry about Bird fitting into the new transition style because of his lack of foot-speed, there are others, namely yours truly, that believe there is little to fret about. Bird's lack of speed will be made up by his unequalled instincts. He'll know where to be.

There once was a time when Bird had a place reserved on the All-NBA first team. Last year was the first season (other than the year he missed with injuries) that he was on the second team. Sure seemed odd. It seems to be getting harder than ever to be one of the top five in the league considering the blonde bomber racked up 10 triple-doubles last season. Only Magic Johnson (11) had more triple-doubles. The

way Bird passes the ball, especially the long outlet, he could find himself atop the league in this category if the Celtics' transition game comes off as planned.

Last season the Celtics were second only to Utah in shooting (49.8%) from the field. They could lead the league with a few more easy hoops since their lofty standing from the floor didn't have many bunnies.

As for the bomb, the Celtics were nowhere among the leaders in treys attempted in their first full season since the departure of Danny Ainge. They averaged just under five a game. Don't expect that total to increase in the style change.

Though an up-tempo style doesn't appear to be the best thing for 37-year-old legs, Robert Parish may actually benefit from it. In the old halfcourt set-up, he was forced to bang with centers inside and his body should take less pounding than ever before.

Did you know that Celtics coach Chris Ford made the first three-point field goal ever in the NBA? He launched it on October 12, 1979.

This column is being written on the eve of the Celtics opener against the Cleveland Cavs. Presently the Celtics are without the services of guard John Bagley, nursing a sore right knee. Bagley's brief Celtics career, in short, has been a bomb. He's often hurt, rarely in shape and his defense is the matador CBA style.

The Denver Nuggets, notorious in years past for their run-and-gun style, will give the term a new meaning this season under first-year coach Paul Westhead as teams have been scoring points against them in bushels. The Celtics beat them twice in the exhibition season, tallying 173 and 158 points. The difference between the Nuggets approach and the Celtics new plan is simple. The Nuggets get the ball up the floor as fast as they can and launch it as soon as possible. The Celtics just want to get the ball up the floor in the attack zone as quickly as possible, but plan on pulling the trigger when the shot presents itself.

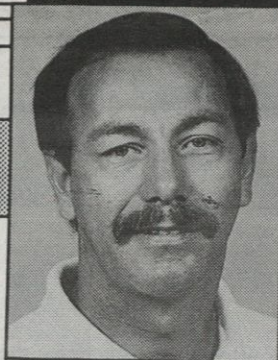
A year ago at this time this scribe went on record in the preseason with a little prognostication, picking Portland to go all the way, drawing some snickers from his peers. With head firmly placed on the guillotine once again, though nobody asked, look for them to get one step beyond last season's achievement. They won't miss this time.

There are different levels in the NBA. The following groupings are nothing more than one veteran NBA scribe's opinion in a league that has a parity like none other in professional sports.

Which level do you think the Celtics will be in this year?

- Level I: Portland, Lakers, Detroit, Phoenix, Utah, San Antonio.
- Level II: Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Cleveland.
- Level III: Milwaukee, Indiana, Atlanta, Dallas, Seattle, Houston.
- Level IV: Golden State, Clippers, Washington, Denver.
- Level V: Miami, New Jersey, Orlando, Minnesota, Charlotte, Sacramento.

Again, nobody asked, but I'm getting this funny, long-range feeling that Seattle will be a formidable, though very longshot, foe come playoff time. Just a hunch.



By Chris Ford

Coaches Corner

The Team

Why was this a good pre-season? I don't think you look necessarily at wins and losses, although in our case, the record

reflects a strong start. I thought we succeeded in two very important areas. First, we were able to employ a new group of players, working for the first time as a unit, and implement a running game. We will still run a halfcourt game, and in some of our experienced veterans, we still have the weapons to win using this attack. However, we want to run at every favorable opportunity.

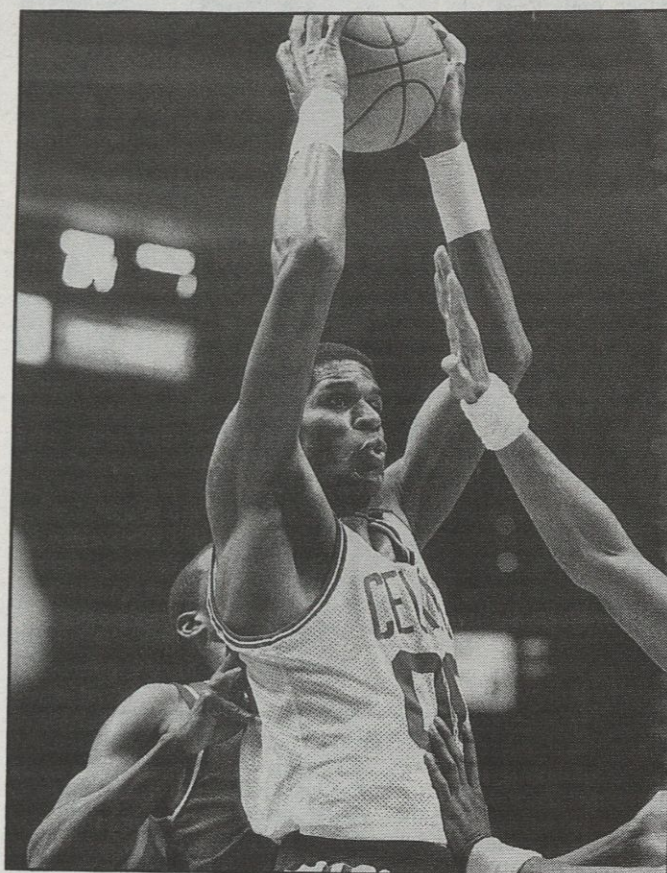
The second reason this was a successful camp is that we had a very competitive camp, without a weak link. Arguably every player on our roster at the beginning of the pre-season could have played here. We had to begin somewhere, so we did cut Carrick DeHart and Eric McArthur, players we liked. Eric can help a team, playing defense, working hard, outplaying people on the boards and in the open floor. We did think he needed to improve his outside shooting.

Cutdown time as usual was something approaching pure anguish. I've been there before as a player, when you know that your time may be coming up. In my last year as a player, that is, my final pre-season as a player, ironically, I had a great camp. I came to camp in good shape, played well, did the right things. But I warned my family ahead of time: get ready because it looks like "the end." The Celtics in 1982-83 had a number of good veteran guards including Tiny Archibald, Quinn Buckner and Danny Ainge, who was just starting to gain his confidence. Being cut is one of the toughest things a player has to deal with on an emotional level. But you deal with the facts — I'm telling how I did it as a player — and you move on.

We opened the season with this attitude: The season will be fun, because we'll try a lot of different things. I believe we have the versatility here that we haven't had in years. For the first time since we had Tiny as the lead guard (1979-83. Though Tiny was here in 1978-79, he rarely played), the Celtics finally have the tools to run, with Brian Shaw, Dee Brown, Kevin Gamble and Reggie Lewis in the backcourt and players like Eddie Pinckney, for example, in the frontcourt.

But we open the season knowing too that we still have a strong element of continuity. Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Robert Parish have been here for ten seasons, and they remain forces. We think we have several different ways to win this year. As I said as far back as the press conference announcing my own hiring, there will be ups and downs during an NBA season, and I understand that when I say a season will be "fun," I'm leaving out the weeks and months of traveling, the back-to-back situations, the mental grid, etc. But I think we'll be good. And that's fun.

A look at the key individuals on the team. **LARRY BIRD.** I was asked about minutes regarding Larry Bird. I refuse to allow the media to paint me into a corner regarding



Robert Parish and his ten seasons of experience will be a force inside.

minutes, especially concerning Larry. I think Larry continues to play exceptionally well and we'll use him at both forward spots. Larry is still a focal point here, and we're perfectly happy to have him take control. He's been bothered by a bad back, but he was ready to start the season.

KEVIN MCHALE. Kevin is still a powerful presence in the low post. Although it would appear the running game might detract from his game, in the reality of it, he can become even more of a threat. For with the court opened up with more transition, teams can't pack it in as they've done in the past, because the defense is moving around, unable to set themselves up. And in our transition game, there are few better in the league hitting the trailer jump shot than Kevin McHale. Kevin's shot-blocking was up last season.

ROBERT PARISH. Robert is the consummate professional. He was asked about his average field goal attempts, and how they might be declining with our emphasis on running. It really didn't bother him, he said, he "was used to it." Robert Parish cares about one thing: winning. We brought him along slow in the pre-season, and used the final (120-102 win over Utah) as the game to sharpen his skills by giving him more minutes. Robert had 20 points in the first half, against Mark Eaton. The running game helps him; I don't care that much if he's down the floor on offense. Kicking the ball out on the quick outlet to Brian Shaw or Dee Brown is enough.

Robert Parish has always been our force in the middle, an intimidating presence.

BRIAN SHAW. We've basically turned the offense over to Brian as the point guard. There have been generally, good

reports; back from the European League, he's shown he hasn't lost his game. We've run the ball effectively because Brian Shaw is constantly pushing the ball up the floor with his relentless style. We had a different game against the Hawks early in the pre-season, a game when Dominique Wilkins and Rumeal Robinson ran us. We talked long and hard to Brian about this. He's our point guard on offense, and on defense. The guys on the perimeter have to sort out their responsibilities every time down the floor.

REGGIE LEWIS. We think this may be a banner season for Reggie. Because we're designing the offense primarily to take advantage of Reggie's strengths: his quickness on the drive and shooting from the two and three spots, and the fast

break offense to utilize his speed advantage over whoever he's up against, either in the two or three positions. Defensively, he's improving but we still have to stay after him.

ED PINCKNEY. Eddie was injured (strained tendons in his foot) through much of the pre-season, but I was pleased he was running well by the opener. I agree he didn't exactly mesh with the system last season, even though he started well. We're

trying to build a system this year that takes advantage of our players' strengths, and hides weaknesses. I believe Eddie can play — he has the physical tools to defend, block shots and score in the running game.

JOE KLEINE. I believe confidence is critical to success in this game and in the three years he's been here, Joe's game and belief in himself have grown. He's worked on his footwork and offense over the summer, so we're seeing different moves from him now, running, spinning hooks for example, because he's worked hard on his footwork. Most days after practice, he's polishing his game, with Kevin McHale, Eddie Pinckney and Stojko Vrankovic.

DEE BROWN. Overall, Dee Brown has more than met our expectations. His defense and his good judgment on offense have been the most surprising features of his game. I think, that for a rookie, he's been superb in judging when to shoot from the outside (and he shoots it well from there) and when to drive to penetrate. What he has to work on most is defending — staying with his man and not playing the ball.

DAVE POPSON. All along we've been impressed with Dave — he excelled in our rookie camp, in the L.A. Summer League and back here, both in our scrimmages against Yugoslavia and in our preseason camp. Dave's very sound fundamentally, he has real good hands for a big man and he's the type of player we can play several minutes in stretches and not be hurt. Quality frontcourt depth is critical to maximize our running game; ideally you have five men running the floor constantly putting pressure on a defense.

STOJKO VRANKOVIC. We have been very impressed. He's come in here and shown quickness, an ability to block shots, and most importantly a great work ethic.

MICHAEL SMITH. I don't think you can fault Michael Smith's preseason. He came into camp in great shape, he's worked hard and he's had several good practices. It's been a great camp this preseason and Michael Smith has been another one of the fifteen players that belongs in this league.

KEVIN GAMBLE. In a real sense, Kevin Gamble set this wheel in motion because from the first day of camp, he was one of the bright spots. He's going to the hoop. He's sticking the jumper. He is getting better defensively. Kevin Gamble has earned playing time.

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Larry's Working Harder Than Ever

Bird Is Looking For Another Ring

By Jim Bianchine

It has been a long time since a lean kid with flowing golden locks and boyish grin first stepped foot on the fabled parquet floor of the Boston Garden, looking as if he had just stepped off the set of the Hollywood movie "Hoosiers".

Since that time, three World Championships and five trips to the NBA Finals for those counting, volumes have been written about his triumphs, while his brilliant statistical accomplishments fill ledgers. Though the farmboy look has faded, his hair quaffed closer to his head and a few pounds of muscle added along with some subtle battle scars, Larry Bird's name is still treated with a certain reverence.

When you get done totalling all his championship rings, MVP trophies and the trove of other significant accomplishments, Bird is arguably the best to ever play the game.

The wunderkind impact on the game began with the extraordinary Lazarus-like resurrection he led in the 1979-80 season. The fresh-faced rookie helped a floundering 29-53 team a season earlier improve into a 61-21 division champion. But, that was simply the beginning of the legend that lives on today.

Despite superstardom which began the moment he let fly his first feathery 20-footer, Bird remains one thing... simply Larry Bird, homespun and hardworking.

His personality is very much a part of the Boston Celtics. The names and faces around him have changed over the years, but his approach is the same as it was more than a decade ago.

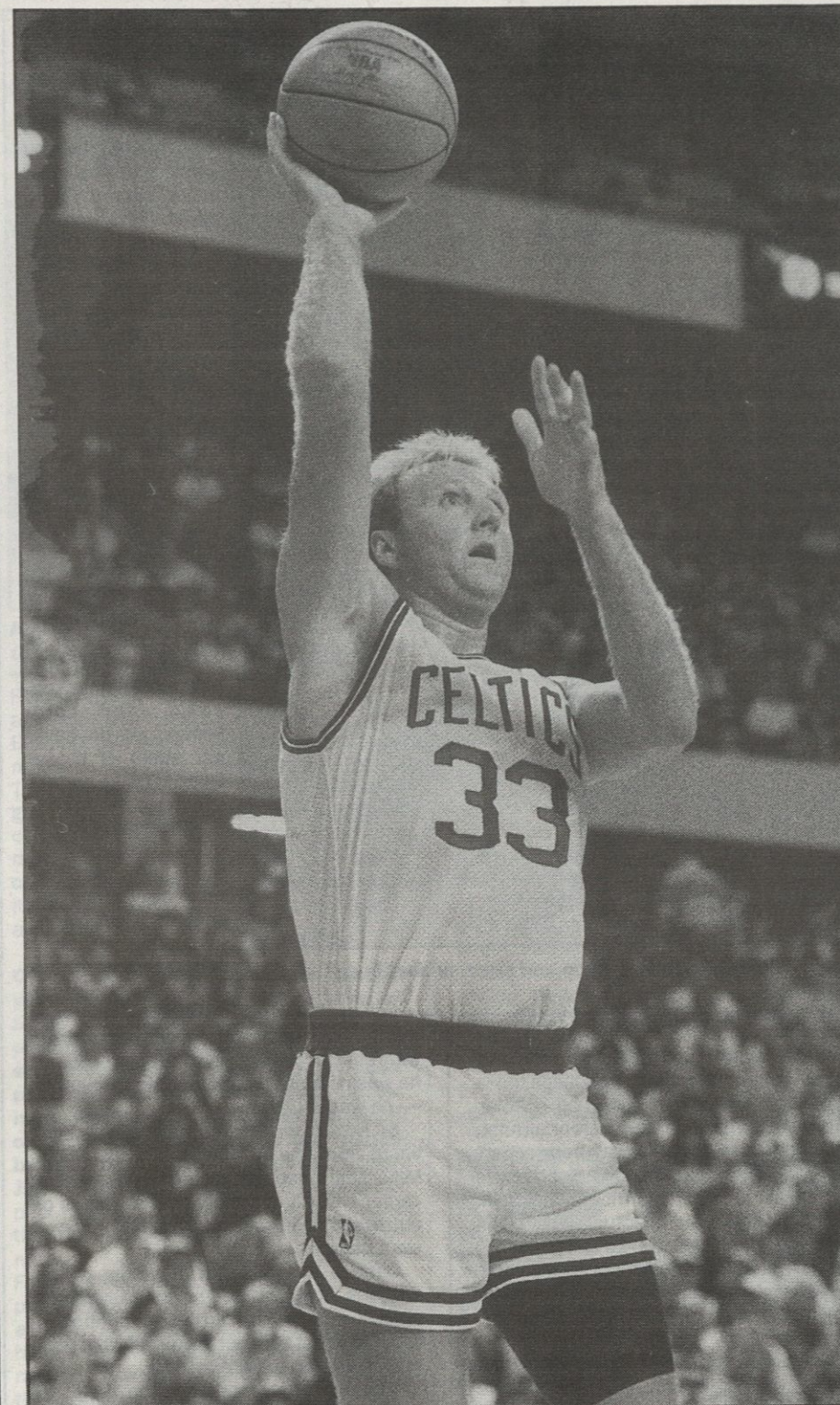
After feeling the sting of the embarrassing first-round loss to the New York Knicks as much as anyone in the organization, the 33-year-old blonde bomber came into pre-season camp with the same serious approach he has for years. The personnel around him saw change and the team's entire outlook on style had to undergo a total facelift. But the bottom line to Bird was the same as always — do what it takes to WIN.

"I can't say we are in a rebuilding process, but we made some moves and changed coaches. That's happened before. The Celtics are not a team to panic," said Bird, reflecting the very same view of things as the 1990-91 season was about to unfold.

The last time the Celtics played for real, they were run into the ground by a relentless Knicks uptempo plan that took its toll. Change from the traditional half-court style that led to the raising of three World Championship banners in the "Bird-Era" was imminent. The first sign the winds of change were blowing in Boston came when the Celtics fired coach Jimmy Rodgers. The second was when they released veteran guard Dennis Johnson.

The new emphasis was on speed, and the running game suddenly took shape with the drafting of a jet out of Jacksonville named Dee Brown and Brian Shaw's return to the Celtics fold. When first-year head coach Chris Ford met with the troops he made it clear they would run and run and run.

After winning six of eight preseason games and employing a fast-paced style



Larry Bird: "The running game has picked up some, but we have to play together now win... But it is fun to play this way."

far removed from the plodding past, Bird's face was the first indication he gives the new-look Celtics his stamp of approval. It was written all over it with every full-court pass or fastbreak.

"The running game has picked up some, but we have to play together and do the little things it takes to win," he said cautiously. "But it's fun to play this way."

"It's really no different for me than any other time. I get the ball, move in and pass it to the open man. I think running allows me the opportunity to do a lot of things," said Bird, who comes up with something new all the time just when you think you've seen everything.

"Anytime you pick up speed in the backcourt like Dee Brown and Brian Shaw you'll get the ball up. We just have to try to learn the running game. The guys have to learn the system and be patient," he said.

Bird, an honor student of the game, who stays three plays ahead of everyone else, according to former Celtics coach Bill Fitch, is also a realist and is hardly ready to abandon the inside game that made the Celtics part of NBA lore.

"There's no question our strength for 12 years has been getting the ball low. We'll never lose that whether we adjust to the running game or not," he said.

Ford likes the way his tenacious forward

fits into the fast-paced game.

"In the uptempo game, the ball finds his hands. He draws the defense, then shows his great decision-making (skill). He seems comfortable with what we're doing."

"When we first thought about it (running game), he was a little reluctant and Kevin (McHale) and Robert (Parish) too. But they know everyone is going to benefit from our so-called uptempo game," said Ford.

"We're going to try to use Larry in the best role possible. He's a good passer, good rebounder and can shoot, even in the uptempo game," said Ford, realizing how

"There are very few nights I felt I played so well I was so excited I couldn't sleep. A lot of players are satisfied with what they do. Those same things don't satisfy me."

...Larry Bird

lethal Larry's passing can become when the floor spreads in transition.

If the preseason is any indication of how Bird is adjusting, the Celtics' foes are in for some long nights. Bird has employed behind the back passes, over-the-head, pinpoint bounce passes and blind feeds to open teammates on the run with a new creativity. What he lacks in speed, he makes up in instinct.

Still Bird believes in the blend of speed and a devastating inside game. "I think we'll be the same force inside as we always have been, but will blend in the new guys outside," he said.

The memories of last year's disappointing first-round loss linger and he realizes what the team has to do from the beginning. "We have to prepare ourselves for the playoffs. We won 52 games last year and then lost in the first round. That's how our season went all year," said Bird.

"We were playing well then everything collapsed," said Bird, who got stronger as the season went after missing the previous season due to surgery on both heels.

Bostonians share a new optimism for the season ahead with the transfusion of new blood into a team of old reliables. Bird remains cautiously optimistic.

"In 1986, we thought everything was right. We had the number two draft choice (Len Bias) and Bill Walton wasn't playing in pain. Then the bottom fell out. It's been uphill every since. I look for some good things. For starters, winning more than 52 games," he said.

No one expects more of Bird than Bird.

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Looking For A Fresh Start

Michael Smith Has Prepared Himself For A Better Second Season

By Mike Spellman

He plays a lot like Larry...I hope."

From the moment those words were spoken by Arnold "Red" Auerbach, the guy whose every basketball insight is revered locally as nothing less than divine prophecy, the future of Michael Smith in the NBA was changed for all time.

The average local fan knew scant little about the BYU forward up until June 25, 1989. Most, it seemed, had heard of him. Those who followed college basketball with any regularity could have told you that his strengths, in addition to his athletic frame (6'10", 225 pounds), were shooting and passing.

But on June 25, NBA Draft Day 1989, all that changed when Commissioner David Stern stepped to his podium and announced that the Boston Celtics had taken Smith with the 13th selection overall, which represented their earliest pick (not counting the ill-fated and tragic Len Bias choice) since the 1980 theft of Kevin McHale. Instantly, all of New England was hungry for details.

The initial reports about his speed were contradicting—we heard from one source that he would add some much needed speed to the aging Celtics' frontcourt, while another authority intimated that he ran the floor like a tired Rick Robey. There was information that his defensive intensity in college came under question, but then someone was telling us not to worry because, after all, he was just so much better than everybody else in the not so talent-laden Western Athletic Conference that it was tough for him to stay motivated at both ends of the floor. His numbers off the glass appeared respectable, but the line was that his rebounding was not a strong suit.

In the hours immediately following the selection of Smith, bunches of Boston's basketball backers from Bangor to Bridgeport grew increasingly annoyed over the lack of a verifiable description. But then, finally, the word came straight from the master himself—on the evening news, in the morning paper—"He's plays a lot like Larry." (It did not take long for the qualifier "I hope" to be all but disregarded. After all, Red doesn't hope, Red knows.)

Needless to say, most of us were instantly convinced that the one time red head had done it again—swiping the second coming of Larry Bird while, just as had happened in the '78 draft, the rest of the league's head honchos were either too myopic or just plain dumb to see Smith as such.

How could anyone have passed on a guy like this was the question we posed to one another—a point guard's mind and ability in a power forward's body. He was three times named to the All-Conference Team, averaged 19 points per game during his four years and finished as BYU's second all time scorer behind old friend Danny Ainge with 2,319 career points. He also connected on 43 percent (116 for 270) of his career 3-point field goal attempts and 87.8 percent of his free throws, which included a top nationwide mark of 92.5



Smith: "I'm ready, I'm in shape and I'm confident in my abilities."

(160 for 173) in his senior year. What's more, he was a natural athlete who could've gotten a free ride through college on a basketball, football or volleyball scholarship. As a person, he was a clear altruist, having taken two years away from school and basketball following his Sophomore year to serve on a Mormon Mission in Argentina, and an intellectual, which was attested to by his 3.8 college cum. To boot, the first interviews to appear in the local papers made him appear as personable a fellow to come down the pike since Mr. Deeds.

Of course, in some quarters, there was some second guessing that the Celtics should have taken a guard, which turned into outright criticism a few weeks later when Brian Shaw bid the team arrivaderci. However, for the most part, the honeymoon between Smith and the Boston sports community was just peachy...until training camp began.

The rumblings started when Smith, who had been unable to participate in rookie camp two months earlier because he had not yet been under contract, got off to a slow start in veteran's camp, appearing for the most part to be awkward and tentative. Then, after a few days in which his overall play improved only marginally, he was deemed physically unable to take part in workouts because of shin splints and back pains, which were at least partially due to, of all things, his not being in top condition. Subsequently, he missed all of the pre-

season games and the first two weeks of the regular season. The final straw, however, was when Red was quoted to say that maybe he should have taken Vlade Divac (who went to the Lakers on the 27 pick) instead. This dramatic turn of events, going from Mr. Auerbach's sweetheart to just another draft day flop, not surprisingly, proved too much for most loyalists to bear.

For weeks following his deactivation, Smith was the number one target of local talk show hosts and just about every sportswriter with a penchant for dragging an athlete across the coals (and Lord knows, we do have our share of those types in these parts).

Almost overnight, Smith became, in our eyes, hopelessly slow, a terrible rebounder and a pathetic defender. Evaluating his slow release and short arms, the pervasive feeling suddenly was

that he'd never be able to get his shot off with any success at this level. Moreover, he was no longer intelligent or personable—he was a flake.

By November 17, the day he was activated from the IL, the then 24-year old Mike Smith had already suffered a whole career's worth of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, and his had not yet even begun.

Despite this plethora of verbal pokes and jabs, however, Smith, who truly raises optimism to a fine art form, continues today to insist that not a word of what was said or written ever fazed him.

"None of that ever bothered me," he said recently. "I realized almost immediately last year that just about all of my problems were brought on by mistakes in conditioning I made based on the advice I was given to bulk up. So, it didn't bother me much at all, because there was nothing I could do about it except learn from it and avoid those mistakes this time around, which I have."

His maiden voyage in the NBA was plagued by the type of inconsistencies one can almost expect from a rookie, and especially one who is playing on a predominantly veteran squad. He appeared in 65 games, averaging just over nine minutes per contest along with 5.0 points, while sitting out nine others on the decision of head coach Jimmy Rodgers. However, a string of seven straight starts from February 23 to March 9—during which he

averaged nearly 28 minutes, 14.6 points and four rebounds—along with a handful of other promising offensive showings, succeeded in at least temporarily placating the hanging mobs. And, by season's end, most who follow the Celtics closely knew the Mike Smith story by heart (after being drafted, he followed some nameless advisor's recommendation to work on bulking up, which he did. Unfortunately, he then got sick and, as a result, lost some of his conditioning, gained some more weight, came into camp a bit out of shape and paid for it), and, by and large, had accepted it.

In retrospect, the only thing Smith regrets is having heeded some bad advice too quickly, for he is assured the one thing about his character that should not be called into question is his desire to succeed. "I was told that I needed to get bigger and stronger to compete in the NBA, and by the time I found out this wasn't necessarily the case it was too late," said Smith. "It took me a while to recover, but I worked hard and I was pleased with my progress once I got my game back to normal."

Today, Mike Smith is doing everything in his power to get ready for his second season in the NBA, hopeful that he'll get more of a chance this time around to show what he has to offer, and confident that he's worked out many of the bugs in his game, but wary all the same.

"I'm ready, I'm in shape and I'm confident in my abilities," declared Smith. "Now, I just have to hope I get the chance to prove myself."

Ay, there's the rub. Mike Smith reported to camp this year in great shape and did just about everything the coaches asked of him. Chris Ford has publicly praised him on numerous occasions for his hard work and overall improvement. Now, Mike Smith is waiting for a chance, a chance to redeem himself and show everyone that Red's initial impressions were not that far off, yet a chance that may never come, not in a Boston uniform anyway.

Persistent trade rumors have seemingly been swirling around Smith since the C's disappointing first round playoff elimination in May at the hands of the hated Knicks. Examining the present Celtics' roster, Smith clearly appears the most likely candidate to be shipped out of town in a deal. His biggest problem, of course, is that he has no apparent designation within Chris Ford's master scheme, unlike other non-starters Joe Kleine, Ed Pinckney, Dee Brown and Kevin Gamble, as the latter three provide the speed Ford so covets and Big Joe can satisfactorily spell Robert Parish in the middle. Meanwhile, the Boston 12 are still without an established long-range threat in the backcourt and a quick small forward.

"I really have no idea about what might be going on right now, but I honestly don't pay much attention to these types of things anyway," said Smith, acknowledging that he is aware of the trade scuttlebutt. "I like it here, but if I were traded, who knows, the situation could be better for me or worse. All I can do is roll with the punches."

"To tell you the truth, though, if they trade me or even cut me, I'd still be a happy camper, because every day I feel blessed just to be in the position I am. I've got a great family, I make real good money and I'm doing something I enjoy very much."

Man To Man

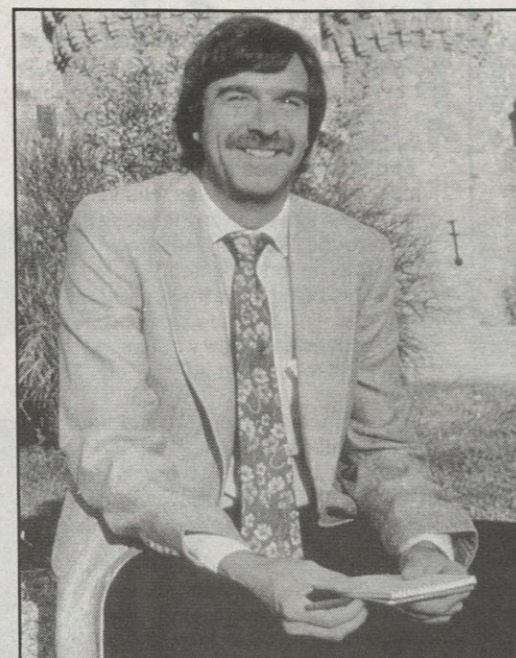
Sports Illustrated's Jack McCallum Has Second Thoughts About Celts

By Andy Murphy

In his recent preview of the NBA season, Sports Illustrated's Jack McCallum picked the Portland Trail Blazers and the Chicago Bulls for this year's NBA finals.

Since writing that article, Jack has had some second thoughts, especially because of the improvement of the Celtics and the 76ers.

Celtics Pride tracked down Jack McCallum to get his thoughts, not to mention his second thoughts, on the Celtics, the NBA and the new book he's writing that deals with, who else, the Celtics.



McCallum: "I think they (Celtics) have a chance to be better than they were last year."

CELTICS PRIDE: the Celtics are out with a new look this year, running the ball and playing pressure defense. What do you think about it?

JACK MCCALLUM: The fans might want to consider a little bit of caution, because people were saying the same thing about the Celtics when Jimmy Rodgers first came in. That was Brian Shaw's first year and that was supposed to be their new look.

This time, though, since Shaw is a third year professional instead of a rookie, Dee Brown is on the team, Larry Bird is healthy and McHale and Parish, contrary to all logic, don't appear to be any older, it seems that the Celtics are a stronger team this year.

I picked the Celtics to win the Atlantic Division and to be fourth in the Eastern Conference, which doesn't mean anything. I think they have a chance to be better than they were last year, and while initially I didn't think the Sixers would be any better, it turns out they might be improved too.

CP: So do you think the Atlantic Division can produce one of the representatives in the NBA finals?

JM: You can't really tell at this point of the season, but I think that both the Celtics and the Sixers have closed the gap between the Central and Atlantic Divisions. The only teams that seem stronger than them are Chicago and Detroit.

CP: But in your preview, you picked Cleveland as the third place team in the East. Have you changed your mind?

JM: I probably overestimated Cleveland when I picked them third. On paper, they look like a strong team, but there's something missing with them. Guys that have left the team have said off the record that they're not a very tough team. And I think that's true when you analyze it. So now I like the Celtics and the Sixers almost as much as I like Detroit and Chicago. I still consider them to be long shots to be better than Detroit and Chicago, but they're not ridiculous long shots.

CP: It seems that Reggie Lewis has quietly emerged as the new lead man on the Celtics, the Big Three notwithstanding. Do you think that's true?

JM: It takes a while for a player to become comfortable with being "The Guy." As long as Bird is there, you can't really say Reggie is "The Guy," but I think that each year

tons, but when the Pistons started getting good, that's exactly the mix they had. They had Sally and Rodman who were both unpredictable. You never knew what you were going to get from them from game to game. But what happened with them was the old guys like James Edwards and Bill Laimbeer, who was never the quickest guy in the world so he played like an older player, were energized by these young guys.

Isiah was always saying how the young guys got the team fired up and the older guys were able to feed of the young guys. The question is, Are the Celtics going to be able to do that? I think they have to.

No matter what you say about how great Parish, McHale and Bird are, they need to feed off that Shaw and Dee Brown wildness and youth. Part of the reason why Bird has been so good over the years is his ego and his belief in himself, but I think he's going to have to change that a little bit now.

CP: What's your opinion of Chris Ford?

JM: I've always been a very strong Ford guy. I played high school basketball against him. We weren't great friends, and he was 100 times better than I was, but he was someone I really respected.

As a coach, he was always one of the assistants everyone talked about. And when he got the head coaching job, there were questions about his close relationship to McHale. And he was also the guy on the staff who was close to Bird—they'd always have three point shooting contests. So the question was, could he now become their head coach? My answer is, No problem. He set out from the beginning to create that head coach distance from the players that is needed.

CP: Judging from your article in S.I., are you rock solid on the belief that this

year's NBA champion will come from the Western Conference?

JM: No. The more convincing logical theory is that the West teams will tire themselves out so much that the East team will be able to feed on that and pull through in the finals. However, since I picked Detroit not to make it into the finals, I thought Portland's experience would carry them through.

To tell you the truth, though, this year I was kind of throwing darts because I think there are five teams in the West that could easily be finalists, and judging from the starts the Celtics and Sixers have had, my initial judgment that Chicago and Detroit are the only two teams that could come out of the East may be wrong. I'd still have to put the Celtics and the Sixers several paces behind those two teams, but it would not amaze me now if one of them were able to get there.

CP: This is shaping up to be one of the more interesting seasons in the NBA, isn't it?

JM: This is by far the most interesting year we've had in a long time. Because of the way the Lakers have dominated, there was never a year where there were more than two teams that could conceivably come out of the West. And now with the Celtics and Philly reviving the Atlantic Division, and that's not even talking about the Knicks, I think we could be in for the most interesting year we've had in a long while.

CP: What's this new book you're writing?

JM: It doesn't have a title yet, but I want to follow the entire NBA through the eyes of one team, and the one team I chose was the Celtics. There have been a lot of books about the Celtics, but I'm hoping that this one will be a little different from the rest.

I picked the Celtics because I think they're the most interesting team in the league. I'm going to try to see about half their games, and the book should be out towards the beginning of next season.

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Larry Bird
Continued from page 7

"I think I can shoot the ball better than last year. I was pretty pleased with my rebounding, but I never did hit that big shot we needed time after time and the team relies on me for that," he said.

Actually, Bird may have understated his overall value despite not shooting the ball up to his own lofty standards. He was 11th in the league in scoring, 12th in assists, 13th in rebounding and led the team in steals despite playing only six games the year before.

Despite the team's new approach, Bird's is very much the same. "Mine hasn't changed at all, but I see a team trying to do something different than past years. If a guy is open I'm going to try to pass to him. We'll run more and get more easy baskets," said Bird, probably remembering all the easy baskets the Knicks got in the playoffs against the tiring Celtics.

Bird doesn't see his game dramatically changing with the team's new concept.

Nor is Ford going to try to improve on a Picasso. "We'll try to use Larry in the best role possible. He seemingly is comfortable in this new style."

Ford doesn't appear overly concerned

that Bird came into the preseason a little out of shape or his star's back has been a little sore.

"He came into camp a little out of shape and his back is a little sore, but he knows what it takes to win. He's been the leader and helped raise three banners to the rafters," said Ford calmly.

"One of his greatest assets to this team is his leadership and work ethic. He is dedicated and has a willingness to work and to win," said the coach.

In professional sports, the burden of winning is usually placed directly on the shoulders of the team's best player. Bird doesn't feel the weight of the world or Boston's traditional championship demands on his shoulders at all. "I've never really felt that. I just like to play my game. I'm the sort of player that knows what is expected of me," he said.

His image is another thing that he spends little time worrying about. "I know stars are looked up to, but I'm not really worried about any certain image," said Bird, who first came to the Hub a little introverted, but the shy kid soon became quite candid and exhibits great patience with the press.

"If they (kids) want to look up to me, that's great. But I always looked up to my father. I just do what I've got to do. I just do

my job," said Bird who is forever cordial but remains a private person.

Only those on the inside really know his true homespun personality. He's a guy who really doesn't say a lot unless he feels something should be said. He's a straight-shooter in more ways than one, and when he speaks, he isn't afraid to speak his mind. What he says, he means.

The thing that is special about him is his fortitude. He possesses a drive that separates him from fellow superstars.

"There are very few nights I felt I played so well I was so excited I couldn't sleep. A lot of players are satisfied with what they do. Those same things don't satisfy me," said Bird, which makes him what he is.

Bird's value goes far beyond his deadly jumper or his slick passes. His very presence has an influence on the young players he is around. Rookie Dee Brown is one player that he has affected.

"Just his being there makes you want to learn from him. You see him and want to ask questions and know what he did to get where he is today. And he'll tell you," said Brown.

"He wants everybody on the team to be good. He does everything for the team. He's a star, but goes 110 percent though he's one of the greatest players in history,"

said Brown.

Not only does Bird impart his wisdom on his teammates, he is a major motivator by simply exhibiting confidence in them. "If you play well, he shows confidence in you. When he sees you can do it, he encourages you. He's like a player-coach out there," said Brown.

In seasons past, the focus has been on Bird from the outset, but with the Brian Shaw controversy, the release of Dennis Johnson, a coaching change and a variety of other interesting sidelights, Bird feels he has been able to go about his business like never before.

"Let somebody else have all the pressure on them for a change," he laughed. "In college it was the same thing. I was the focal point. Now it's spread around this season," he said.

Not that long ago and for good reason, the Celtics had been an NBA bullseye, the target of many a team. Their step down from the ranks of nearly unbeatable to another of the many good teams in a league that boasts great parody is to his liking.

"We're sort of taken for granted now. But, if our guards come through, we're going to be a great team," he said, totally in character.

One thing that can always be counted on is Bird's honesty. He isn't a player that underestimates opponents and never overestimates his own team. Bird will be quite candid about what he feels the Celtics can and can't do at any given point in the season.

As he ages, each year there are those who point at something. Why not? For most players at the age of 33, their best years are behind them. But we're not talking about most players.

Bird was forced to miss two exhibition games with a sore back, before suiting up for the final preseason tilt in Providence against Utah. Aching back and all, he scorched the Jazz for 28 points (12-of-19) grabbed 11 rebound doled out five assists and continued to show astounding anticipation in his game, especially with his pinpoint passing. He seems to have started to establish some of the same uncanny oncourt communication with some of the younger players he shared with Dennis Johnson for many years without a word being uttered. With Bird, sometimes a look is worth far more than words and twice as effective.

Even when his body sometimes fails him, his mind remains a keen weapon and his will on some nights is stronger than his back. The shrewd survive.

To some, Bird's back may be a source of concern. Think of how many aching parts have been of grave concern in the past. Yet he never seems to lose a step.

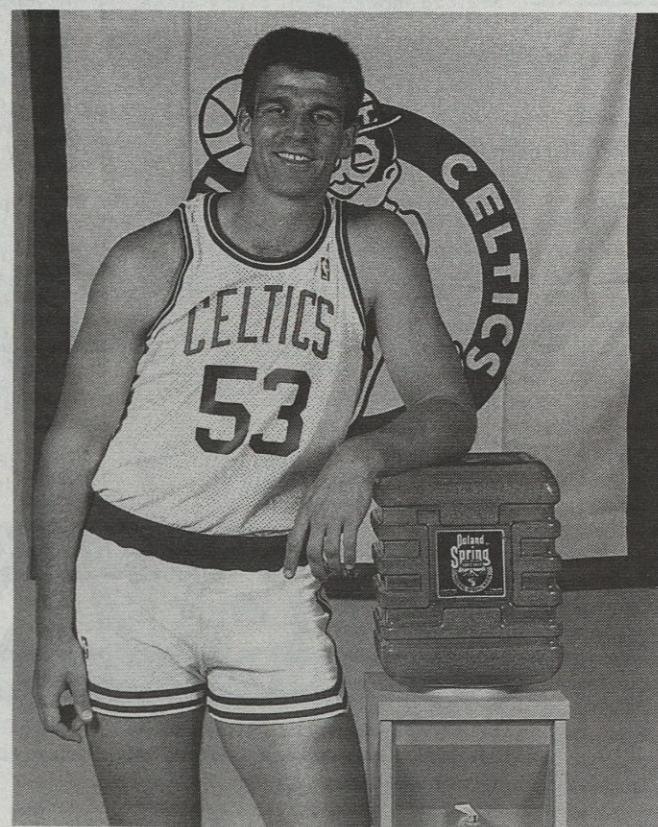
Bird, not making a big deal out of playing in pain, something all athletes must endure, said, "It feels better now, but it comes and it goes." His problem is in the sacroiliac joint in the lower back. However, if he plays the way he did against the Jazz in the team's final tuneup, he's going to be a pain to opponents in a place a little lower.

The age old question in Boston each year has been the question of old age. But a year removed from a season after surgery finds Bird flying high with the same old expectations. He wants to win.

The Celtics were once predictable, but don't appear to be this season as Bird's creativity could have the chance to flourish in the new concept. About the only thing predictable could be Bird's traditionally potent performance.

Despite anything he does, there still remains just one way to simply describe the veteran warrior. Larry is just, well... Larry.

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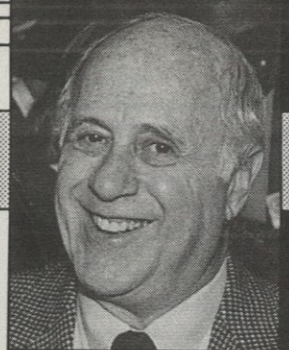
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By Red Auerbach

Red On Roundball

Great Expectations

From the beginning of the pre-season, I've been asked about the status of the ballclub. The questions at the time centered around our young backcourt. Would the moves we made in bringing Brian Shaw back, drafting Dee Brown, and then releasing Dennis Johnson result in a better ballclub?

There were questions about our veterans, Kevin McHale, Larry Bird and Robert Parish, because many thought we had been busy trying to trade them.

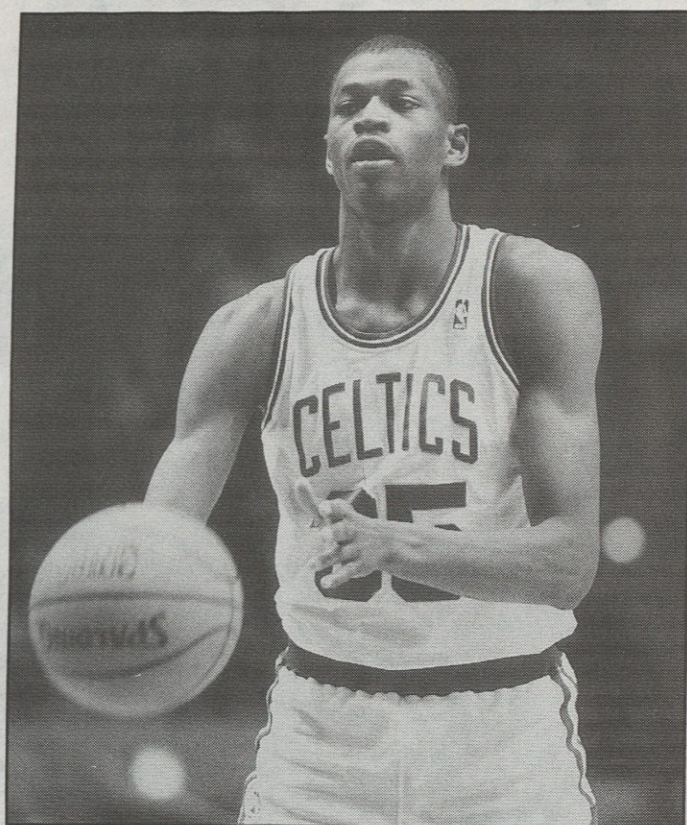
Others weren't sure how Chris Ford and the new coaching staff would do in their first year.

I didn't respond to the concerns about our backcourt, because I needed to see them play in the pre-season. There wasn't anything to say about the frontcourt, except that we know what we have there, and it's exceptional. We weren't trying to trade them. And finally, I had, and have confidence in Chris and the assistants, Don Casey and Jon Jennings. There's a great blend of leadership and preparedness. And knowledge.

After seeing the team for a month, as we headed into our opener in Boston against Cleveland, I have high hopes. I think we have a very exciting ballclub, a team that will be very competitive in the East and beyond. Things will be different in the backcourt; we'll be faster, quicker. And comparable to that blend in the coaching staff, I feel we have a good chemistry throughout the entire team.

The Backcourt. We'll run a lot more this season, as much as 65-70% of the time. This is because the backcourt places a whole different perspective to the team.

We were forced to make the moves we made last summer. Brain and Dee have played extremely well this pre-season,



Reggie Lewis helps maintain a faster pace.

he was in school saw the type of player he was then, an aggressive guard who went after it in traffic, played good, tough defense, and although he wasn't a great pure shooter, he nevertheless found ways to score. In his rookie season with us, he may have trouble at first, but at the end of the year, he had structured a fine game for himself. I think he's come back better after his season in Italy. I've written here before that although the competition in Italy isn't as good as in the NBA, the pressure on a guy from the Celtics and the NBA was very burdensome. Brain Shaw was expected to be a superstar every time out in Italy. At first, this affected him in a negative sense. In the beginning he had se-

forcing a quicker tempo. Kevin Gamble and Reggie Lewis have helped maintain a faster pace.

I will be the first man to say that, however, we will definitely miss the stabilizing influence and brains of Dennis Johnson. This was a class all-pro. But it is fact, too, that all great players come to an end.

But we're looking forward to having Brian Shaw come in and take over the reins. He has all of the potential to be a great player. And Brian has leadership qualities I can see.

I think all of us who scouted Brian when

vere regrets about playing in Europe, and I think he's glad to finally be back. But he adjusted to the situation in Italy, and accepted the responsibility of being a highly paid American. He averaged 25.2 ppg in the play-offs and it's obvious from the way he's shooting his jumper he's much more confident in his offensive game.

I think the coaches have done a good job teaching these guys the need to run, as well as the need to pull it back, too. Chris Ford has pointed out that it comes from the respect the younger guards have for Larry, Kevin and Robert. That is, the tendency for

a Brian Shaw or a Dee Brown might be always to run, but they know that if they do pull it back and run the halfcourt offense, Larry Bird, Kevin McHale or Robert Parish will get points.

In Shaw's rookie season, when he and Larry played together, there was a special chemistry, unusual for a younger player to work so well with someone like Larry Bird, a forward with the court sense comparable to a Cousy. Brian has the instincts and the talent to lead this ballclub.

Veteran Mindset. Several years ago I made the statement that a veteran player will have problems later in his career with consistency. A veteran will show flashes of his great skills, but there will be gaps of time when it's just not there.

For many veterans, it's true, and this is when you have to consider making moves. I don't think that this is the case with our group in the frontcourt. In Larry, Kevin and Robert, we have three guys who are not only brilliant individually, we also have the significant advantage of having had them together for ten seasons. What keeps a veteran at a very high level, in effect, transcending problems lesser players may have when they age? Pride is one factor. Another is conditioning; for example, Robert Parish refuses to fall out of shape in the off-season and I'll argue that he's played as well as he ever has during the past two seasons. Another reason veterans are able to endure is the type of system they play in. If a team has depth, and is able to spot a player in certain situations, such as the Lakers did with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, you can maximize his production (and the team's, of course).

We continue to have full confidence in these veterans. They have pride in themselves and in the team and they are highly motivated to win another championship, this late in their careers.

And does their presence take the pressure off of our young point guards? You bet your life.

Coaching. I'm very proud of the job the coaches have done. It is a nice blend. Chris has had years of experience as a player and assistant, in Boston. Don Casey has been a skillful teacher and an incisive analyst as a bench coach. And Jon Jennings lives this game and is an endless worker.

Predictions? None here because you don't want to look too far ahead. But to repeat, this will be an interesting year.

NBA Notebook

A Look At The 1990-91 Western Conference

By Andy Roth

The following article reflects the opinion of an independent writer who writes for several publications and are in no way the views of the *Boston Celtics* or *Celtics Pride*.

Mr. Robinson and the Spurs should rule the Midwest, while there should be enough Magic left in the Lakers to take the Pacific. Come play-off time the West will be a war, with no less than six teams having a legitimate shot of reaching The Finals.

MIDWEST DIVISION

1. SAN ANTONIO. You have to salivate at the great young nucleus — David Robinson, Willie Anderson, Sean Elliott, and Rod Strickland. And there's plenty of room for growth. The big weakness last season was the bench, and several moves were made to solidify that area. At the top of the list was the acquisition of Paul Pressey, who gives the Spurs a quality backup at point guard and small forward. David Greenwood and Mike Mitchell were signed as free agents, and first round pick Dwayne Schintzius, although a gamble, could turn out to be the steal of the draft. The man in the clutch is still Terry Cummings, but Head Coach Larry Brown wants David Robinson to develop a "go-to-shot."

New Faces: Paul Pressey (acquired from Milwaukee), free agents David Greenwood and Mike Mitchell, and rookies Dwayne Schintzius (center), Sean Higgins (forward), and Sidney Green (forward) who was recently acquired from Orlando.

Past History: Frank Brickowski, Johnny Moore

2. UTAH. Having one Malone (Karl) wasn't enough to insure play-off success for the Jazz, so they went out and got another one (Jeff). Paired with John Stockton, and having Karl in the low post, should provide Jeff Malone with more opportunities than he's seen in a long time. His presence also gives the Jazz someone who can create his own shot off the dribble, something that really killed them in past play-offs. One very important ingredient to Utah's success will be the play of Mark Eaton, whose play dropped off drastically last season.

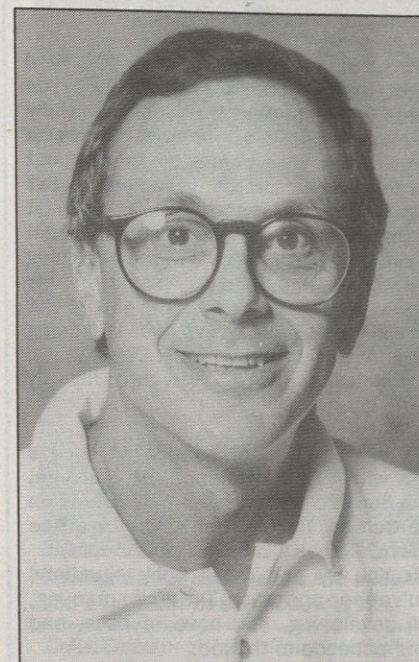
New Faces: Jeff Malone (acquired from Washington), rookie Walter Palmer.

Past History: Eric Leckner, Bobby Hansen

3. DALLAS. The Mavericks decided to trade their future — three number one picks in last years' draft — to take a run at the championship now. Dallas acquired Fat Lever and Rodney McCray, and signed 30 year old free agent Alex English. The Mavs now have one of the strongest starting fives in the league with Rolando Blackman, Derek Harper, James Donaldson, Roy Tarpley, and McCray, with Lever and English coming off the bench. Not bad, but question marks and weaknesses remain. Will Tarpley avoid a third drug strike and banishment from the league? Will Donaldson's knees hold up? Has Blackman lost a step? And where's the frontcourt depth? The final analysis here is the Maves will crap out in rolling the dice for the NBA Crown.

New Faces: Fat Lever, Rodney, McCray, and free agent Alex English

Past History: Bill Wennington



Larry Brown's Spurs should rule the Midwest division this season.

4. HOUSTON. The Rockets are led by Akeem Olajuwon. He is and has been what makes the Rockets go since day one. Unfortunately, he never has had much help. You'll never hear Akeem say, "thank you for your support." It basically hasn't existed. The acquisition of Otis Thorpe prior to last season helped, but the backcourt remains a horror show. The Rockets picked up Kenny Smith from Atlanta in the off-season to play the point. The problem, he's not a good point guard and he's not an exceptionally good shooter either. Sleepy Floyd remains the alternative. Meanwhile, shooting guard could be a problem too, wit Vernon Maxwell holding out for money, and being fined each day he does. This could open up playing time for first round pick Dave Jamerson.

New Faces: Rookies Dave Jamerson (guard) and David Wood (forward), and Kenny Smith (acquired from Atlanta)

Past History: John Lucas, Tim McCormick

5. MINNESOTA. The Wolves were a pain-in-the-you-know-what to many a team in their inaugural season; especially at home where they were 17-24. They should be even tougher this year. The draft brought them 7-footer Felton Spencer and Gerald Glass, and they also acquired spark plug point guard Scott Brooks from the Sixers, giving Head Coach Bill Musselman some quality off the bench. The nucleus of the club is still the trio of Tony Campbell (25 ppg), Pooh Richardson, a First Team All Rookie selection, and Tyrone Corbin.

New Faces: Rookies Felton Spencer (center) and Gerald Glass (guard), and Scott Brooks (acquired from Philadelphia)

6. ORLANDO. The Magic have a nice combination of youth and young veterans. The young veterans go by the names of Sam Vincent — who played very well in his first full year as a starter, Otis Smith, and Scott Skiles.

The real young guys will be asked to play a major role, and should be able to handle it. Look for a big year from Nick Anderson, who was tremendous in the pre-season. Michael Ansley, a steal in the 2nd round in 1989, should be ever better with a year under his belt, and last, but not least, is

top draft pick Dennis Scott, who can shoot it with the best of them. While Head Coach Matt Goukas is relying heavily on youth, he'll need another strong season out of his two most senior players, Terry Catledge (19.4 ppg, 7.6 rpg), and Sidney Green (10.4 ppg, 8.1 rpg)

New Faces: Rookie Dennis Scott (forward), and free agent Greg Kite

7. DENVER. Watching the Nuggets this year, will be like watching a tennis match — back and forth, back and forth. That's because new Head Coach Paul Westhead has brought his run-and-gun-and run and run style from Loyola Marymount to the Mile High City. (I get tired just thinking about it). Westhead is very blunt about his philosophy. "I am the fastest-paced coach. I will accept any and all criticisms because of that," Westhead said. And, if the pre-season was any indication, there could be plenty. Denver fans must have thought they were time-warped back to the ABA the way the final scores read. The Hawks ran up an incredible 196 points. Lost in the shuffle of the new coach and philosophy was some major roster moves. Gone are Fat Lever and Alex English, while the two big additions are rookie guard Chris Jackson, and forward Orlando Woolridge, who was acquired from the Lakers.

PACIFIC DIVISION

1. LAKERS. The wet head is dead. Pat Riley is out, and Mike Dunleavy is in. More importantly, Sam Perkins and Terry Teagle are wearing Laker uniforms. Perkins will be used at power forward and center, while Teagle gives L.A. its first big scoring threat off the bench since Bob McAdoo wore the purple and gold. Mychal Thompson, last years' starting center will go to the bench, replaced by either Perkins or Vlade Divac. Otherwise the cast is very familiar — Magic, Scott, Worthy, and Green. Dunleavy wants to relieve some of the offensive burden from Magic and Worthy, while emphasizing defense to a greater extent than his predecessor.

New Faces: Free agents Sam Perkins and Terry Teagle

Past History: Orland Wollridge and Michael Cooper

2. PORTLAND. The Blazers' starting five — Drexler, Porter, Duckworth, Kersey, and Williams — remains it's strength, but a new face off the bench could be the missing piece to winning it all. Portland is hoping Danny Ainge will be to them what Vinnie Johnson has been to the Pistons. The Blazers also needed some help up front, and they may have found the answer with their late first round pick, Alaa Abdelnaby, who looked very impressive in the pre-season.

New Faces: Free Agent Danny Ainge, rookie Alaa Abdelnaby (forward)

3. SUNS. Phoenix advanced to the Western Conference Finals the last two years, but failed both times to make it to the Championship Series. A less than healthy Kevin Johnson and a noose around Tom Chambers neckled to the Suns elimination last season. KJ and Chambers are back with the rest of the starting unit of Jeff Hornacek, Kurt Rambis and Mark West. Dan Majerle established himself as one of the best sixth men, while Eddie Johnson hopes to bounce back from a disappointing year. Ed Nealy, signed as a free agent, will add some muscle up front.

New Faces: Rookies Cedric Ceballos (forward) and Negele Knight (guard), and Ed Nealy (signed as an unrestricted free agent)

4. SEATTLE. It won't take long for this to be Payton's Place. The Sonics finally filled the void at point guard with the selection of first rounder Gary Payton. The former Oregon State star has flair, a wealth of talent, and is a tremendous one-on-one defender. Payton will make life a lot easier for the likes of Dale Ellis, Xavier McDaniel, and Derrick McKey. Olden Polynice will get more of a look at center in hopes of freeing up Michael Cage to play his natural power forward position. Speaking of power, 20 year old Sean Kemp put on a show in the L.A. Summer Pro League, averaging 24 ppg, and should see more playing time this season.

New Faces: Rookie Gary Payton (guard)

5. CLIPPERS. Bad luck follows this team everywhere. Not long after Danny Manning returned from a serious knee injury, Ron Harper went down with torn knee cartilage, and several weeks later Gary Grant broke his ankle. Grant will be ready for the start of the season, but Harper won't be back until at least January. If the Clippers have anything on their side, its youth. In addition to Grant and Manning, there's Ken Norman, Charles Smith, Benoit Benjamin, and first round picks Bo Kimble and Loy Vaught. Kimble gained national attention with the tragic death of his college teammate, Hank Gathers, but it'll be Vaught who will open people's eyes in the NBA.

New Faces: Rookies Bo Kimble (guard) and Loy Vaught (forward)

6. GOLDEN STATE. The Warriors' fortunes will rest on the health of Alton Lister and Jim Peterson, and the play of rookie power forward Tyrone Hill, who looks like the real thing. Don Nelson had to go with a small lineup most of last season, and was physically over-matched most nights. What Nelson does have going for him is a bunch of very talented young players led by Chris Mullin, an All-NBA selection the past two seasons. Mitch Richmond, the 1988 NBA Rookie of the Year, and Tim Hardaway, an All Rookie Team selection last season. Sarunas Marcialionis, who made the transition from international play to the NBA, hasn't even come close to showing his true talents. His second year should be a big one.

New Faces: Rookies Tyrone Hill (forward), Les Jepsen (center), and Kevin Pritchard (guard), and free agent Steve Johnson

Past History: Terry Teagle

7. SACRAMENTO. Maybe the name of the franchise should be the Sacrificial Kings. Opponents usually salivate at the site of the Kings, and this season should be no different. Yes, the faces have changed, but the outcome will be the same. The Kings had an unprecedented four first round picks, and selected Travis Mays, Lionel Simmons (a future bust), Duane Causwell — an excellent at number 18 — and Anthony Bonner. Also add to your scorecard, Bobby Hansen, Eric Leckner, Rory Sparrow, Byron Irvin, and Bill Wennington. Now exactly an All Star Team. The only returning players of significance are Wayman Tisdale and Antoine Carr.

New Faces: My hands are too tired to write them again. Read the preview one more time.

Past History: Pervis Ellison

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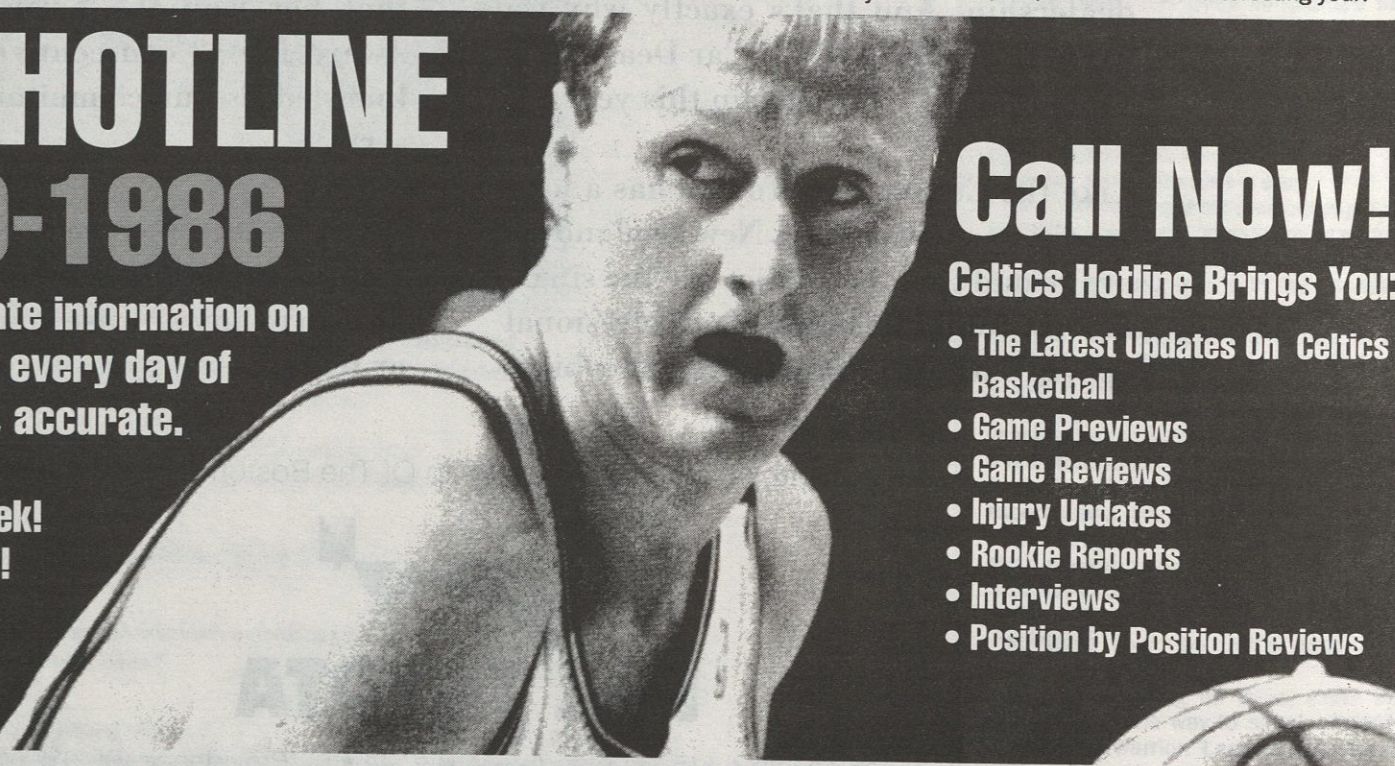
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Innerview

Don Casey Brings Experienced Background To the Bench

Celtics' assistant coach Don Casey was interviewed by Celtics Pride last week. The head coach of Temple University from 1973 through 1982, where he had three 20+ win seasons, Casey moved to the NBA with another Big Five coach, Paul Westhead, who was then in his second NBA head coaching stint with the Chicago Bulls. Casey then coached a season in Italy, in 1985, before moving on to the assistant's spot with the Clippers for three seasons where he then ascended to the top spot for a season and a half. Casey wasn't renewed at the end of last season and this summer he was hired by the Celtics as Chris Ford's first assistant.

Casey sat with Celtics Pride after meeting with Eddie Pinckney for approximately a half hour after practice. Casey and Pinckney had discussed the team and the player's role on this year's Celtics.

CELTICS PRIDE: You've had extensive experience in both college and professional coaching. How are the NCAA and NBA games different?

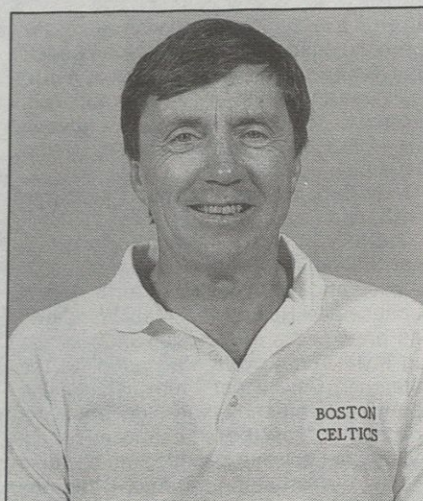
DON CASEY: The two games are like apples and oranges. At Temple, I really didn't have the time to keep track of daily goings-on in the NBA. I think there's a tendency to therefore miss much of what is going on in the professional game. I think, basically, you think there aren't a great deal of tactics in the professional game. However, that's inaccurate. Once you get into the league, you understand that there is plenty going on, and it's contained within the 24 second clock intervals. Lou Carnesecca made me aware of the stark differences between the two games. I think if professional coaches went back to the colleges, they'd simply bring the uptempo game with them, and restructure collegiate attacks, making the offense more two-man game oriented. In the colleges, the attack is more of a passing game approach. The coach who does it most like an NBA coach in the colleges is Jerry Tarkanian of Nevada-Las Vegas. It's an uptempo attack, and Jerry gives the game to his players.

CP: Why did you decide to move to the NBA after the success you had at Temple?

DC: There were politics involved. Temple hired a new president, who immediately began asking if I'd consider moving upstairs to become the athletic director. Something didn't sound right; we had come off a twenty win season and had a good group of freshmen and sophomores. I had two years left on my contract. Later, I learned that the president had begun talking to the present coach (of Temple) on the side. When I had that — feeling — well, I had an opportunity to move to the next level, with a friend, so I went ahead and took the job as assistant with the Bulls.

CP: After a few seasons with the Bulls, you coached a season in Italy. What was that experience like?

DC: I compare Italian basketball to Japanese basketball. The Italian League is the second best run professional league, but to be honest, it isn't the best place to be for an American coach who is either starting out in his career, or in mid-stream. Italian coaches don't want Americans; (American coaches) are viewed as "job takers." The fans don't like the foreign



Casey is Chris Ford's first assistant coach.

coach, nor does the media. I had some very attentive players, and the Italian people were neat. But the ownership and the sponsorship were not ideal for a coach. If a man who was at the end of his coaching career, or toward the end with a good deal of experience, like a Doug Moe had called me and said "should I take it?" I'd say, "yeah." But not if you still wanted to coach.

CP: Tactically, it's different, featuring zone defense. You've written a book on zone defense (Temple of Zones). What part does a zone defense have in the NBA games?

DC: Contrary to what many think, I just don't see a lot of zone defense in the NBA. Oh, there is sagging off for double-teaming, but that's the most significant feature of the halfcourt defense. You do see it more in the fullcourt game, and Jimmy Lynam in fact used this fullcourt zone from the beginning of the game Opening Night when the 76ers defeated the Bulls. Others have had success utilizing this, including Pat Riley (Lakers) and Rick Pitino (New York). Would the zone defense damage the NBA? I don't think so; I watched the Knicks score more points against Scavolini in the McDonald's Open than they scored against us in the second game of the season (Celtics 106-103 win). The game wasn't that much different. I don't think NBA players can play a zone. In the Zone, you can't relax, especially in this League. Offensively, all five opponents are weapons. Zone defenses are too demanding.

CP: After coaching in Italy, you went with the Clippers and worked both as an assistant and as the head coach. It seemed as if your team had something positive developing, with Danny Manning finally back and Ron Harper acquired through a trade. But something happened...

DC: I think the Clippers have a real shot at something this season. The team has a number of good young players. Last season is something I'd rather not dwell on, except to say that good chemistry in this business is a fragile thing. In the course of your career, there are positive and negative experiences. I look at the Clippers' coaching job as an NBA experience as a head coach. In the course of your career, another chapter in the book. I do think that if some of your young players, such as Danny Manning have free rein, the team

might really do something.

CP: At dinner this summer on the final night of the team's rookie camp, you made the statement that you essentially "needed" to stay in coaching, that it was real late in your career to think about another profession. Could you elaborate?

DC: You're in the system so long... you hit an age barrier when it's hard to begin again. It's ironic because at the beginning of my career, coaching high school in New Jersey, I was regarded as too young. But I'm delighted to see guys over fifty doing superior work... Chuck Daly, Doug (Moe), Dick Motta... I had to, and wanted to, stay in the loop.

CP: As an assistant here, what does a man with your experience, at your age, give back to a young group of guards on the Celtics, like a Brian Shaw or a Dee Brown?

DC: You try and recall back situations you've seen and teach. The guys are young, still developing. You have to have, and bring patience to the job.

CP: What's your role with Chris Ford? Is it a difficult task for Ford, a first year coach in the league with no head coaching experience whatsoever?

DC: Guys who have studied the game, have played it, and have a feel for it such as Chris has, are all right. And a team's character and chemistry will be a reflection of the head coach. I'm bringing my experience base to practices, and are filling a role of support. I'm there to make suggestions, a supplementary role.

CP: You met with Eddie Pinckney for a

half hour just now. Is there more individual psychology in the game at this level for coaches?

DC: I think there's considerable psychology in any setting, in life, whether it's marriage, a group, anything. But you can be too analytical, too. In coaching, you try to put the person in the best setting possible so that he's able to express himself at his best, both a player and as a person.

CP: How are you and your family enjoying Boston?

DC: We like cities. I'm from south Jersey, so that's why we decided to live in Boston. Boston has a nice pulse to it, it's a manageable city, easy to get around in. It's a people city. Cities are where everything is — libraries, bookstores, the museum, diverse people. The majority of your academic institutions are cities. There are the restaurants, the theatre.

CP: You mention books. What are you reading?

DC: Non-fiction is what interests me. I've been interested in the personalities of the World War II period — the romance of the survival if it, not that I'm unaware at all of the suffering that went on. I've read biographies of the personalities — Marshall, Hopkins, Patton's books, Bradley's (book). The dynamics of White House decision-making.

CP: Certainly there are similarities to sports. Strategy, for example.

DC: I think the most accurate comparison is with entertainment, staging a film or play. There's a producer, a director, and lead character. Later, a co-star, and a supporting cast, all cooperating to make the story a success.



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A Diary Of Survival

Players Battle To Make Cut

By Bob Schron

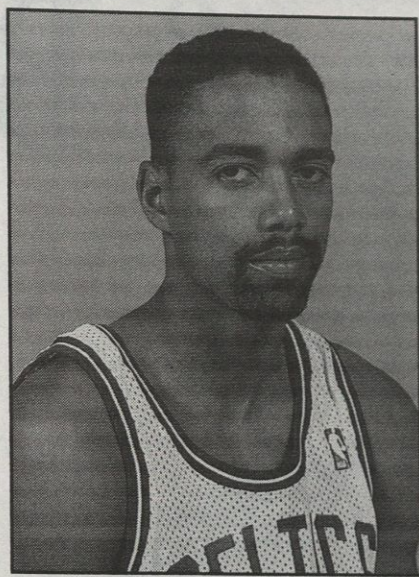
In the waning days of the Celtics' pre-season training period, including the exhibition games the team played, players, media and fans alike speculated on the makeup of the roster. First year coach Chris Ford had made it known since the inception of camp the Celtics were committed to making an adjustment in their style of play — from the halfcourt execution offense of the past nine years to an approach geared to the running attack. In the C's season opener, it plainly worked; despite foul problems incurred by point guards Brian Shaw and Dee Brown, the team nevertheless ran away from a good Cleveland Cavalier unit, 125-102.

This change in attack was more than mere theory to at least four players on the team's pre-season roster — first round draft choice of 1989 Michael Smith and last season's free agent walk-on, the quick point guard Charles Smith. To Sasha Dordevic, of Belgrade, Yugoslavia, the cutdown date meant not only employment in the game he loves, but a sense of place. If he were to make the Celtics, he'd begin life anew in the former land of plenty, America. If not, he was headed back to Yugoslavia. Finally, for Dave Popson, the 6'11" center from North Carolina, a position on the roster meant an end to what he called "roads... roads of travel." Popson, in search of play for pay, had played in the myriad of places a player goes, other than the NBA: The CBA, Europe, and on the fringes of the league, in LA Clipper territory, and the Miami Heat.

Michael Smith. In what he termed the best condition of his life (looking at him one has to concur), Smith has nevertheless managed only to make but slight inroads seemingly into Ford's new style of play. The news about him, rather, has been concerned about him possibly being involved in a trade. Smith addresses these concerns in an interview, two days before the final cut. "I thought I had a good camp," he comments. "But everybody has... Dave Popson's played well, Charles Smith has earned his minutes, all the way to the two and three spots, where Kevin Gamble, Reggie Lewis and Ed Pinckney have done it."

"I admit — I think about (the trade rumors). This morning at practice, I thought something might be up, when Dave Gavitt, Red (Auerbach) and Jan Volk were all here early, and then they disappeared into the office for a meeting. I was shooting hoops out here with Birdy (Larry Bird). I turned to Larry and said, 'Birdy, they're shipping me out.' We kept on shooting and I put it out of my mind the best I could. Then everybody came back out, and nothing was said. I turned back to Larry and said, 'Well, guess the deal didn't go through.' There's pressure, sure. But the truth of it is that I deeply believe I can play in the league." The lean intense Mormon then draws on what obviously is a deep store of faith. "I'm grateful for my time in Boston. If something happens I feel blessed just to have played in Boston." Dressed in his green Celtic practice uniform, he served the court briefly, and heads into the locker room.

Sasha Dordevic. It is cutdown day, and



Charles Smith must rehab the shoulder and work hard to comeback again.

Celtic Director of Public Relations Jeff Twiss remarks that the media horde is one of the largest he's seen for this afternoon's announcement of the final roster. Upstairs in the weight training room at Hellenic College, a writer over hears the players talking to Sasha Dordevic. He sees the players shaking the Yugoslavian's hand, listens, as they wish him luck. Twiss confirms that appearance is reality: Dordevic is cut and the injured veteran John Bagley is placed on Injured Reserve. A final decision on the roster's final spot is to be made later in the afternoon. Dordevic is morose, but carries himself with dignity. Among his closest allies in camp: superstar Bird, whose intensity is complemented well by the tough veteran of the Yugoslavian army.

"I have my visa in good order," says Dordevic, who will play with the national team this season. "I didn't do my best, I know that... I'll be back (in the States) next year, not with the Celtics, but someone else. I have several offers to go to other camps, but I am a Celtic fan and this is where I wanted to be."

At 6'2", the guard, thought the Celtics' brass, was a two guard with point guard-sized dimensions.

Dave Gavitt comments to *The Boston Globe*, "He really was an intelligent player, but he tried to make the NBA at a tough time. He spent last year in the army and he really hasn't played in a year." Fellow Yugoslavian, Stojko Vrankovic remains, and Dordevic drives Stojko from practice, after acting in an interpreter's role for Vrankovic in an interview with *SportsChannel*.

Charles Smith. The Boston locker room is electric this night, Opening Night, and the Celtics easy winners over the Cavs. Starting point guard Brian Shaw attracts a six-deep group of reporters as he talks of his need to remain "the aggressor." I'm the team's point guard, and the guys look to me for that." Shaw is interviewed on Charles Smith's left. On Smith's right, Jack Miller of *The Bay State Banner* interviews Kevin Gamble, a contributor this night with 7-for-8 from the floor. Smith, zealously committed to hard work, discipline and sheer will, sits downcast amidst the tumult and shouting, dressed in a white pullover

sweater with large red and blue triangles, brown slacks, loafers. The Celtics' decision the previous day: Smith, with the lingering after effects of a separated shoulder suffered October 12th, joins Bagley on the IR. Enforced inactivity to Charles Smith, its passiveness a drain, leaves the former Georgetown Player of the Year and Olympian sulky. "But there's nothing I can do about it," reflects Charley. "I can only rehab the shoulder, get out there and work hard (again)." Two days after the injury, Smith, battling to survive, had played anyway, and stunned Ford by playing typical Charles Smith ball, diving to the floor beneath Isiah Thomas for a loose ball, as the seasons initial pre-season contest drew to an ending.

Apparently, the Celtics have played a delay game of their own. As the rumors swirl, the team announces Popson has captured the final spot on the roster. The team made the announcement concerning Smith and Popson several hours after deciding to cut Dordevic and one hour before the 6 o'clock deadline, one day before the opener.

And even though Dave Popson has played only the final two minutes, the euphoria of

victory intoxicated the former North Carolina player, though, as a competitor, he perhaps subconsciously rebels at the notion he may be perceived as a 12th Man. He points to the Denver pre-season game as a turning point in his successful journey — finally — to the Celtics and the NBA. He talks of his persistence in "hanging in there" through the team's rookie camp, its entry into the LA Summer League, where Ford was duly impressed, and the pre-season camp. "I had to do all of it to make this team, and it was something I needed to do because I was going to play somewhere. It's a job: stay focused during practice, during games, because we're running now, and depth is important to the running game. The Celtics resemble North Carolina: Family. I was talking to (UNC coach) Dean Smith two days ago and do so frequently."

"I'm not married. I couldn't have that anchor, because I want to play, have made the commitment to play, for three years. It's been a three year highway — the CBA, Monaco, all throughout Europe. When I was told I made the team? I didn't do anything special. I had this feeling... of accomplishment. Tremendous relief."

Vrankovic On Team, Finally

Ending a three year quest, the Celtics have secured the services of the 7'2" center, Stojko Vrankovic. The team signed Vrankovic to his first contract on April 29, 1988; however, because of different factors, including the wariness of this small city native (Drmis, Yugoslavia) to play basketball in the sixth largest market in the United States, Vrankovic chose to remain in Europe for two years.

Last season, Vrankovic played with Aris in Greece, which made it to the European Final Four. In 1988, Stojko played in the Olympic Games as well as the McDonald's Classic, ironically against the Celtics.

After an erratic rookie camp, Vrankovic's appearance in Boston for the regular season was uncertain. However, he insisted that he would return, and on October 2, the team signed him. Thought to be a true personification of the term "project", rather, Vrankovic has been one of the most pleasant developments in Chris Ford's first Celtic camp.

"I have always wanted to play with the Celtics," Vrankovic said in an interview. "But personal problems prevented me from doing this."

"In Yugoslavia, everybody knows the Celtics. Their winning tradition is an inspiration. When players come over to the United States, they come here to play. I'm ready to play now."

Special assistant coach Dave Cowens, the former Celtic nominated again for the Hall of Fame, has been brought into camp to work with Stojko, and Cowens has been impressed with Vrankovic's potential. Vrankovic, in turn, is honored to be working with Cowens.

"He is a legend in the game," Vrankovic commented. "It's been part of a good time here. I've felt a great welcome from everybody here. Dave Cowens is a great coach, and a great man, too."

"There is a great difference between the NBA and European basketball, but not as great as I thought it was when I first came here to play. I am here to do my best. I believe I can help the team, especially on the defensive end. I am prepared to do whatever's asked."

The Celtics understand the former European player needs more work and a long-term time schedule. They won't rush him, and they are already zeroing in on areas of development.

"We're constantly working with him to keep his arms up," commented Ford. "He's got a tremendous work ethic though. I think the players realize it will take time. They've accepted him and it's working out."

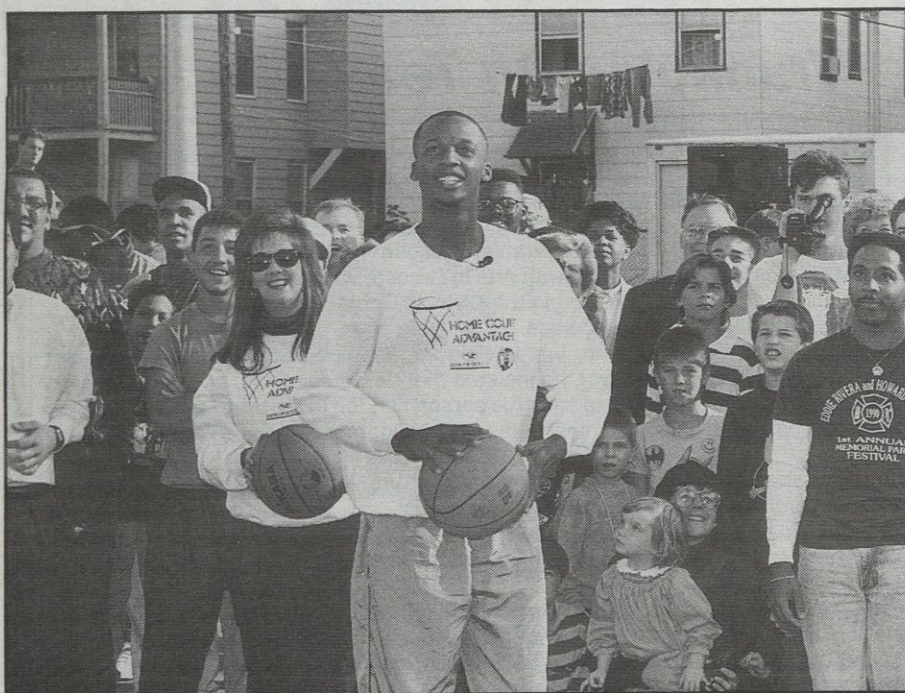
"You can see it by the time Stojko is putting in; he works out before practice, then through the one and a half hours we practice, and then afterward, with Dave, he works for another forty-five minutes. This was something we didn't know about, but it only serves to make him a better player. He certainly has the physical tools."

The issue of the cross-cultural integration cannot be underestimated. Remaining questions to be answered: Will Stojko become homesick, or disoriented in this culture? Will he retain the patience required for players who are projects, something that's better understood by players who are totally inculcated with the United States version of professional basketball.

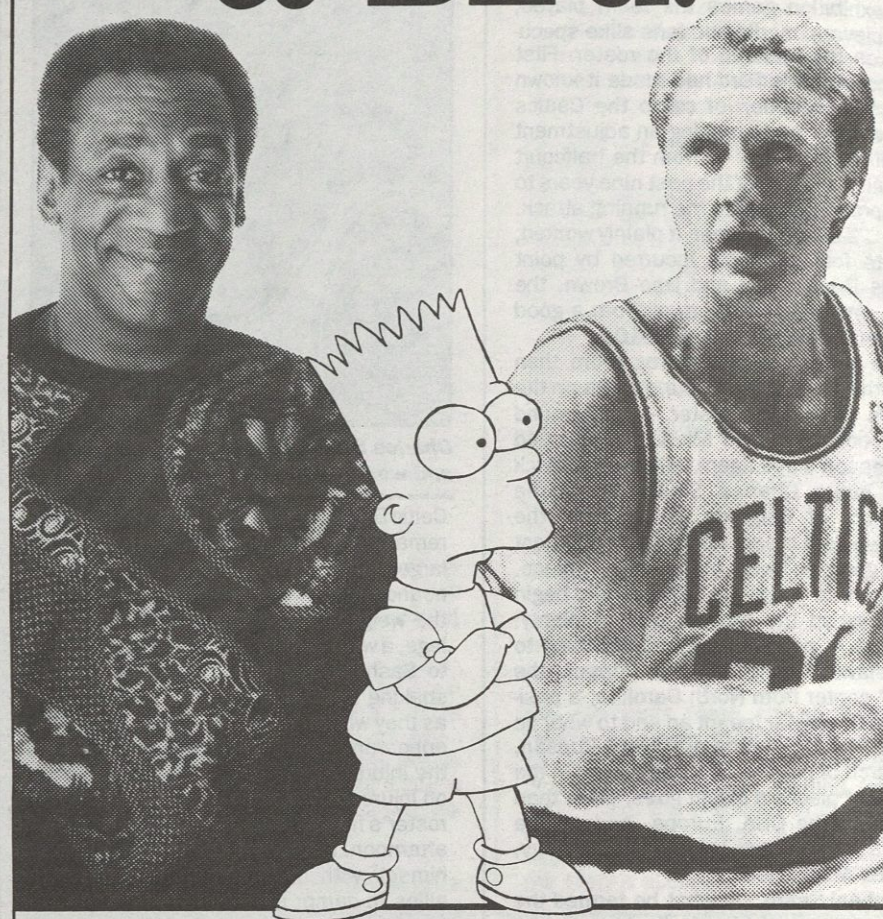


Dedication Celebration In Waterbury

Celtics stars Kevin McHale and Brian Shaw help Bank of Boston Connecticut/Bank of Boston/Celtics Home Court Advantage Program dedicate renovated Rivera-Hughes Basketball Court in Waterbury.



Bill, Bart & Bird.



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Celtics Ready Themselves For The Long Haul

By Mike Spellman

The release of rookie camp standout Eric McArthur, especially so early on, must have surprised a lot of people who'd been convinced (as this scribe was originally) that he was exactly what the doctor had ordered for the Celtics.

It became obvious almost from Day 1 of veteran's camp that, except for super-project Stojko Vrankovic, McArthur was the most unpolished of the 17 players in attendance, and, as it turned out, at only 6'6", this just wouldn't do.

At present, McArthur is an extremely strong rebounder who runs the floor better than average and plays a pretty mean man-to-man at the defensive end, but guess what? Th...th...th...that's all folks.

He does not handle, pass or shoot the ball like anyone at his size who is looking to break into the big time should. In fact, to be honest, he looks positively lost with the ball in his hands just about anytime he is not flying towards the basket with a cram in mind. At last report, he was headed for some CBA locale, which is exactly where he belongs.

HOWEVER, this is not to say that Eric McArthur will never be heard from again. If he can continue to nurture what raw ability he's got and augments that with an offensive repertoire he can feel comfortable with, there's no reason to believe he will not eventually make some lucky NBA club a valuable role player.

It is clear that with the nucleus of Bird, McHale and Parish, management remains hopeful that another championship or two is at least a possibility. Consequently, they are not willing to keep two projects around, and they've already made a long term commitment to the ultra-raw 7'2 Vrankovic. However, with the venerable trio showing their age just a bit more with each passing season, the need for a strong supporting cast is essential, and since Ed Pinckney, Michael Smith, Joe Kleine and even Dave Popson showed themselves to be capable of making an immediate impact, the McArthur project was simply a luxury the team could not afford at this time.

Of course, the biggest things McArthur has to overcome now are his own insecurities.

This guy was wound up tighter than a bongo drum from day one of camp and everytime he threw the ball away or missed an easy shot you could almost see the fabric of his character being stretched that much thinner.

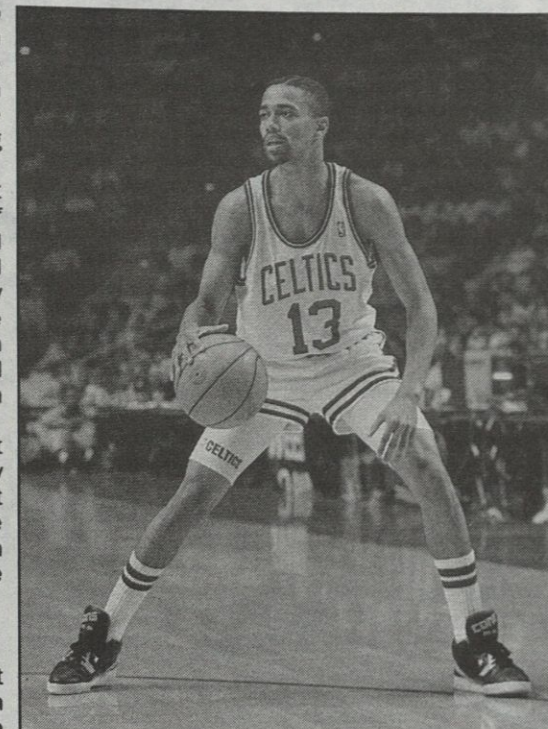
While it is undeniably true that Eric requires no small amount of seasoning, it is also true that had he played by instinct as he did when he was such a tremendously dominating presence at rookie camp in July, he would have been given a much longer look and could quite possibly have even cracked the roster.

However, the bottom line is that McArthur is a perceptive, physically gifted and hard working kid. So it is entirely possible that we'll be reading great things about him in two or three years and wishing the Celtics had hung on to him.

Boy, wasn't it fortunate that second year man Charles Smith came down with a dreaded case of the Hellenic Flu (that mysterious affliction which seems to strike in a variety of forms on the eve of a difficult roster decision, thereby at least temporarily sparing management from said decision). For the record, Smith was placed on the Injured Reserved List because of a partially separated shoulder.

Of course, the fact that the front office did not make this announcement until less than two hours remained before the league's deadline for finalizing their 12-man roster would seem to be a pretty good indication that some sort of deal had been in the works and had not yet been abandoned. It is no secret that management would like to add the defensive-minded small forward to their roster they'd hoped McArthur would become. The players rumored to be on the block are Michael Smith, Ed Pinckney and Dave Popson, who are each better suited to the power forward spot.

Dave Gavitt confirmed a few weeks ago that there had at one time been serious thoughts entertained about making an of-



Charles Smith has come down with the dreaded "Hellenic Flu."

fer to free agent Vinnie Johnson, the noted Celtics' killer who finally came to terms on a two year deal with his career team, the Detroit Pistons.

The Celts CEO stated the plans to pursue the 33-year old shooting guard did not go beyond the consideration stage because of salary cap restrictions and confidence in the present list of players they have to choose from. It seems reasonably safe to conclude that this latter reasoning had more than a little to do with the resigning of the 25 year old Kevin Gamble. At less than one-fifth of VJ's final price, he's almost guaranteed to be a steal.

Through the 8-game pre-season swing, "Oscar" averaged 24 minutes and 16.8 points per game on 52-for-76 shooting (68.7 percent), and gave every appearance that if used properly, as he was not last season, he could continue putting up such microwave-like numbers.

When Gamble is playing with confidence, as he has since the beginning of training camp, he is a formidable scoring threat from inside and out. He goes to the hoop and finishes as well as any Celtic guard, and his touch from the perimeter has improved to the point where it is not all that difficult to imagine his eventually becoming a legitimate three-point specialist (believe it).

As was suspected, it is now clear that it will take Tommy Heinsohn some time to settle his new job as the play-by-play man for the Celtics' away telecasts on Channel 25. However, this does not mean that tuners in won't enjoy themselves listening to him while he perfects his new craft.

Although he has had considerable difficulty thus far conforming to his job description and relegating his comments to the immediate on-court action, the dueling insights of Heinsohn and fellow Celtic legend Bob Cousy, the one being paid to provide

commentary, has an appeal all its own. And besides, thanks to a little extra attention to that end of the telecast by Cooz, viewers have been kept adequately abreast of who's scoring the baskets, dishing out the assists, grabbing the rebounds, et al.

Heinsohn, whose has more evident appeal and personality than any three network play-by-play announcers put together, had been an extremely highly thought of colorman for CBS up through last year, when NBC outbid CBS for the exclusive NBA coverage contract. It is rather obvious that the former Celtics player ('56-65) and coach ('69-'78) is not naturally given to the slick, rambling sales job that today's TV audiences have come to expect from the man on the #1 mike. But think about it for a second, is this a drawback or a refreshing change?

Of course, if Heinie really wants to iron out some of the wrinkles in his play-by-play delivery, he need do nothing other than become more attentive of the job done by his partner for all the Celtics' home games on Sports Channel, Mike Gorman (who, in the opinion of a lot of local sports' junkies, is as good as play-by-play caller as the Boston sports scene has seen in a very long time).

Although he is not ready to publicly commit to anything concrete, Chris Ford has come pretty close to revealing in the last few pre-season games what his intended substitution pattern will be going into the regular 82-game campaign.

Robert Parish should average about 28 minutes a game and Joe Kleine should get around 15 minutes behind him in the pivot. Kevin McHale should also see some short stints in the middle.

Overall, McHale will probably log approximately 35 minutes or so on the average, most of which will come at the power forward spot. Even at the age of 33 (he'll turn 34 in December), it would come as a surprise if Larry Bird were not the high minute man again. In all likelihood, he should grab about 38 minutes per contest swinging back and forth between the 3 and 4 spots, playing an intricate part in whatever look Ford happens to be going with at any given time.

Michael Smith and/or Ed Pinckney should see somewhat regular action, say 14 minutes or so a game, at both frontcourt positions. About 15 minutes of playing time will most likely also go out to big guards Reggie Lewis and Kevin Gamble at the small forward.

Starting out his rookie campaign, Dee Brown should get around 25 minutes per at the point off the bench, while the 1-guard starter Brian Shaw will likely see no less than 30 minutes a night, occasionally teaming with Brown and moving to shooting guard.

36 minutes per contest sounds about right for Lewis, with at least two-thirds of that coming at the shooting guard. Gamble, who it seems has earned at least 20 minutes or so, will also spend most of his time at the 2 spot.

Deep reserves Charles Smith and Stojko Vrankovic will probably have their playing time relegated to special situations and garbage time.



Kevin "The Slasher" Gamble

Celtics' Guard Returns To Rotation With A Flourish

By Bob Schron

In the background, the Celtics were concluding a final pre-season practice, running through a secondary break configuration. On the floor, Assistant Coach Don Casey was supervising as the team utilized a four guard formation with Brian Shaw, Dee Brown, Reggie Lewis and Kevin Gamble hustling through air-tight figure eight patterns in the suddenly formed halfcourt set.

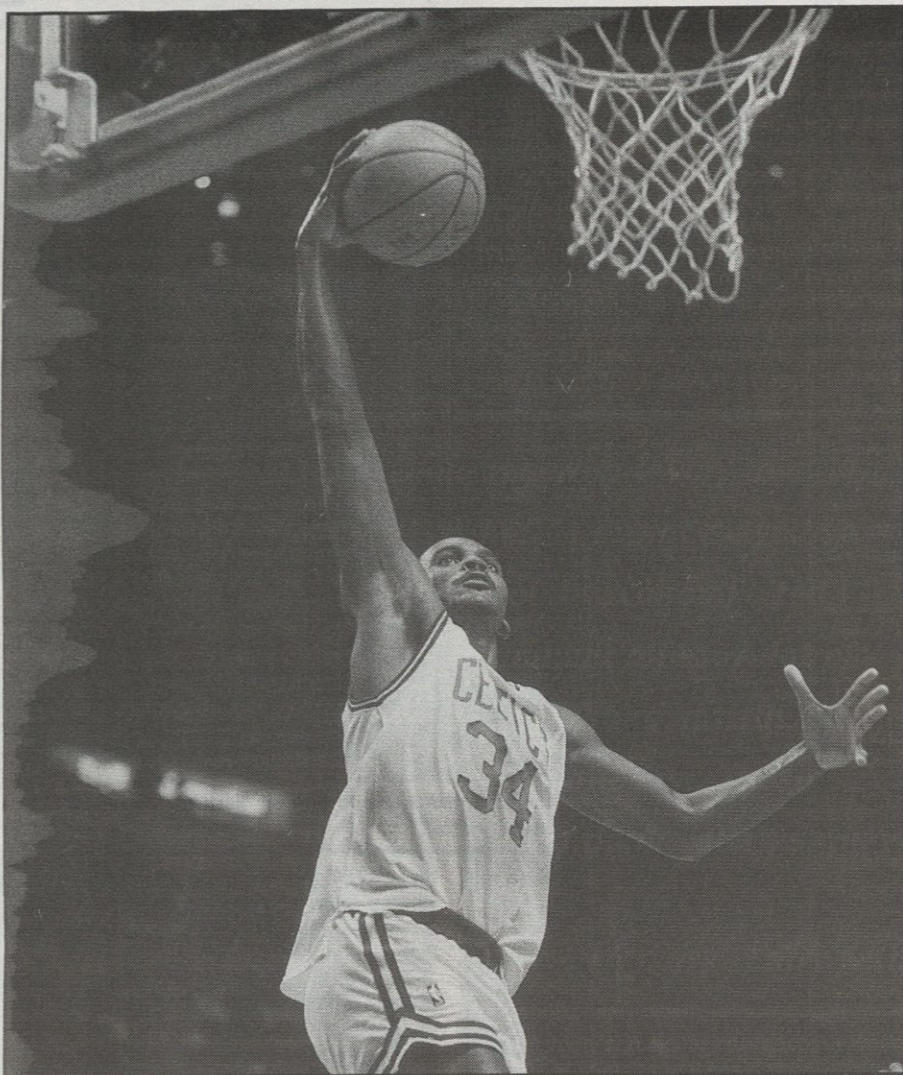
In front, on the sideline, Chris Ford was attempting to make optimal use of time, hurriedly convening his daily meeting with the media, mindful of a two o'clock meeting at the Celtics' offices downtown. He was answering a question now, referring to the guards enacting the team's offensive scheme now.

"We're cautiously optimistic about the team," Ford explained, "but more than that, we're just anxious to get started. We're going to run more. We finally have the tools to do it.

"We'll run three guards out there. We'll play Brian and Dee Brown together. By stressing the necessity of running, we think we have an attack where guys like Reggie, Brian, Dee and Kevin can play major roles at one time or another. It's a solid guard rotation."

Ford turned his attention to Gamble, a standout this pre-season. "He's been playing great. He's done everything we've hoped he could do. One of his strengths has always been his ability to 'slash,' to go to the basket and he's been showing that all pre-season. And he's improved defensively. It's still early, but I've liked what I've seen so far."

Like his coach that morning, Gamble has understood from the beginning of training camp that he had to make full use of his time. After the Celtics signed him to a qualifying offer this summer, for \$375,000, Gamble was free to test the free agency market, with the possibility of the Celtics matching any offer he would



Gamble: "We're making an all out effort to run this season."

receive. However, after the three year veteran had shown seemingly legitimate talent in his tenure with Boston, this summer no other NBA teams were interested enough to make an offer. Forced with limited alter-

natives, but still wanting to make it in the NBA, Gamble returned to Boston.

In a setting eighteen months ago which deemed it be off the record, a very highly placed executive in the Celtics' front office insisted that Gamble had the potential to be an "outstanding" NBA player. This prediction leading into the 1989-90 season, however, based on Gamble's version of Andy Warhol's "fifteen minutes of fame" at the conclusion of the 1988-89 season, when Gamble arose from the tail-end of the Celtics' bench to star and lead the tiring staggering team into that season's playoffs, that forecast never reached fulfillment. Shaw's decision to play in Italy, John Bagley's inconsistent play at the point, and uncertainty about the guard rotation all season contributed to a scenario which highlighted Gamble's weaknesses: his seemingly precise jumper, fired from an angle, sighted from the side, spun off the rim failing to catch the treasured shooters' bounce. His ability to finish off those slashing drives through the lane, where his upper body strength positively clears out space through the Patrick Ewings and John Williamsses, never panned out. His erratic performance converting in those situations made his defense a question mark, according to scouts in the league, a glaring weakness.

"I wanted to be here," Gamble commented last week. "I have a better feel for things and more of an opportunity since

Jim (Paxson) was released at the beginning of camp. I came back in shape."

"It's been a topic of concern of mine," said Ford of Gamble's defense. "I told him at the start that he has to play better defense in order to get more time."

"I understood it," Gamble responds, "and it was something I worked hard on every day in practice. I'm not one to set far-reaching goals. One practice at a time, and the same goes for setting long range goals for our team. We've done a lot in this camp, finding out about Dee Brown, getting Brian back into the group, looking at different combinations. But we just have to go out and win one game at a time, the game we're playing that night."

"I'm just intending to go out there and run every night, fill the lanes and put myself in good position. I think the coaching change from Jimmy (Rodgers) to Chris had to help me — it was a fresh start for everybody. Though I felt bad for Jimmy when he was fired. He gave me my shot."

At the end of the aforementioned '88-89 campaign, Rodgers turned to Gamble after the latter had averaged approximately one minute per game after signing with the team as a free agent near mid-season. Rodgers had seen Gamble's intensity in practice; ironically Rodgers turned to Gamble as a starter because he thought Gamble would match up well with the then-Cleveland Cavalier, the spectacular off-guard Ron Harper. Gamble averaged an astounding 22.8 ppg after his year of inactivity.

"It's good to have Kevin 'back'," added Kevin McHale, the team's power forward. "What he gives us is another weapon. We're making an all out effort to run this season. When Kevin's out there, he's running the floor, placing additional pressure on the defense. It takes five guys to run and he's part of that."

"It's a different season," Gamble adds. "New players, new coaching, new attitude, which comes at the start of every season. It's different without Dennis Johnson, because he would always point things out about the game, on and off the floor. But people forget: when I did play so well at the end of that season, Brian Shaw was coming into his own at the end of his rookie year. We've played together; he knows what I can do."

Gamble travels essentially a solitary path after games and practices, cruising away in a jeep-styled vehicle, listening to rap, soul and jazz. He's friendly with the younger players on the team, as well as the veteran Robert Parish, and Johnson. Gamble has an associate's degree in law enforcement from Iowa, where he played on a superb Hawkeye team which reached the final eight in the very competitive season in 1987, when UNLV eliminated Iowa and went on to be eliminated in turn by champion Indiana. Gamble played under Dr. Tom Davis, former Boston College mentor, who stressed the running and pressing game which Gamble plays with his most assurance.

Gamble is grateful to be back in the rotation. He refers back to the workout now. "See what was important?" he reflects. "Getting a regular turn. Being mentioned as part of the group that gets (playing) time. It's all you can ask for: and be aggressive out there and keep earning it."

By Bob Schron

With the beginning of a new season, undoubtedly, the tendency is for unbridled optimism. Chris Ford, the team's new head coach, isn't making specific promises, but he does say that "we have more options. With Brian Shaw, Reggie Lewis, Kevin Gamble and Dee Brown all running and playing well, there's a preference for running on this team. What that means is that the game will be fun. I think if we can maintain a good attitude about staying with the game plan and we can get some easy baskets, then I think we'll play well because the enthusiasm level will be high."

Health is a critical factor, as Robert Parish continues to point out. Larry Bird, the team's long-time great player, was kept out of two pre-season games in Buffalo and Toronto with a sore back. But even after the rest period, Bird reported that "the rest really didn't do any good. In fact, it's worse."... Always prone to half-truths, Bird nevertheless was reporting facts here. The back is a problem for him.

Health for the veterans is imperative, especially early. "It's important," says Parish. "We have a lot of young guys in the backcourt and, believe me, they're good. Very good. But they are young. Until we get into the rhythm of the season, and get things going, they'll welcome some of the veterans being out there (in crunch time). That's why I'd like to see us have an injury-free year."

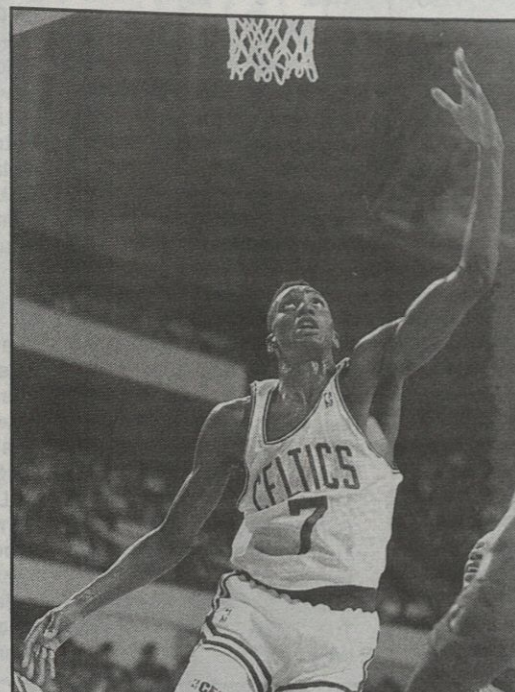
Sasha Dordevic, the 6'2" guard from

Confidential

Celtics Open Season With More Options

Belgrade, made it to the final cut of the Celtics, impressing the coaching staff and his teammates with his ability and leadership. "I thought he had an excellent camp," commented Chris Ford. "In actuality, though, he really has the skills of a shooting guard, though he has the size of a point guard. Sasha is very classy and it was a pleasure to have him here." Interestingly, literally minutes after he was cut, his future suddenly in a dark cloud, SportsChannel needed him to act as interpreter for his friend, Stojko Vrankovic. Without blinking, Dordevic set his anguish aside and did what was asked. Very classy. "I wasn't pleased with my play," he said. "I liked everybody, but they didn't see me at my best... because of my sprained ankle. They didn't see me dunk, for example," commented the poised, John Paxson-type.

Don Casey thinks Paul Westhead's professional version of Loyola-Marymount, the Denver Nuggets, can succeed with his (Westhead's) style of play, incessant running on offense and 48-minute full court pressing defense. Tom Heinsohn's label: Space-Age Basketball. "What Paul's trying to do," commented Casey, "is dictate tempo and he's doing this by trying to force other teams into a similar style of play. But Paul thinks he can win because other teams, because they don't practice this way, won't be able to run and shoot and press as well as his own team."... Celtics' scout Don Mead recalled seeing rookie sensation Dee Brown last November in the Fleet



Dee Brown will create a preference for running when in the game.

Classic in Providence and recalled thinking immediately that Brown was an NBA player. "He scored something like 29 points, but it wasn't the scoring which made up my mind," commented Mead, who has authored articles on defense and lectured in clinics on same. "I just liked the way Dee Brown carried himself; he was totally serious in warmups, showed leadership strength, and he concentrated on defense. I went home and called Rick Weitzman (one of the head scouts on the national level) and told him I liked him. He played like a man on a mission."... Senior Executive Dave Gavitt acknowledged the need for a team to land a defensive-oriented small forward as the C's broke camp last week. "I think both Michael Smith and Eddie Pinckney have worked very hard in that area, but I don't think anyone we have can be characterized as a defensive specialist in that role. Eric McArthur was the closest one we had to filling that role."... The word around camp was that McArthur's lack of a good enough shot from the outside hurt his chances of sticking."... Brian Shaw and Reggie Lewis were featured in a WEEI-Radio (Celtics' radio flagship station) story by Willie Maye, a feature focusing on their close friendship. "We talked nearly every day last season," Shaw told Maye, as Shaw played his season with Il Messaggero... According to Heinsohn, the offense the Celtics are implementing this young season is the closest one he's seen since the 1970's. "We ran (with the Celtics) in the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies. I think Bill Fitch (C's mentor, 1979-83) changed the approach; from that point on, the Celtics were more of a set-up team."... Live spectator at the recent Buster Douglas — Evander Holyfield Heavyweight championship fight: Dennis Johnson (Celtics Pride, October, 1990)... Johnson told Gerry Callahan of The Boston Herald in Las Vegas that his agent, Fred Slaughter, was on the phone with teams, but nothing had broken yet... Celtics' radio play-by-play

broadcaster, Glenn Ordway, like Gavitt, thinks the team is a defensive forward away from winning. "This is a good enough shooting team," said Ordway, "because in transition, Brian Shaw, Reggie Lewis and Larry Bird are dynamite. But the team has to find a way to stop guys like Dominique Wilkins."...

A positive signal for Celtics' followers is that both Celtic assistant coaches, Don Casey and Jon Jennings, on the eve of the Celtics' opener, thought the Celtics were bonafide contenders for a berth in The Finals... This, apart from the fluff one hears concerning prognostications. "I like the way the team 'took' to the defenses we've put in," commented Jennings. "I spoke with Jack Ramsay," commented Casey. "He thinks it's either going to be Philadelphia or Boston as the team who will challenge Detroit. You have to shoot at Detroit." Casey continued. "They know how to win."... Casey and Jennings both ranked Phoenix and Portland as the top two teams in the West... Ramsay, discussing draft choices, thought Chicago helped themselves immeasurably with their selection of the Yugoslavian, Toni Kukoc, the 6'8" point guard/small forward, who starred against the Knicks in the McDonald's Open. "Kukoc is the best player in the world right now in shooting and creating plays off the dribble," commented Ramsay. "I spoke with him in Spain, during the McDonald's Open, and he (Kukoc) said he'll play with Michael Jordan and Chicago (the Celtics' opponents during the first week in a home and home set November 6th and 9th). He's not ready too play this season. But he will play in the NBA."... Casey was asked to rate the most important new players, players who will make the most dramatic impact for a new team. Manute Bol with Philadelphia (from Golden State), Lance Blanks, rookie guard of Detroit, and Dee Brown and Brian Shaw of the Celtics in the East.

In the West: Danny Ainge of the Trail Blazers (from the Kings) and Sam Perkins of the Lakers (from Dallas as a free agent signee)... Kevin McHale on the tam's back-to-back wins in the first weekend of the season: "It's way to early yet, but I was glad to see we rallied and won the second game. Last season was different; we were constantly up and down. I'm hoping we can play consistent ball all year, and keep winning going."... An early version off Special Assignment Coach Dave Cowens' Big Man Camp: Stojko Vrankovic, Dave Popson, Ed Pinckney and McHale... Reggie Lewis on his approach to playing against Jordan, particularly after his hot start: "I think Michael is still the best there is. You can't stop him, rather you think about containing him. I'll go to the open spots of he plays the ball and double teams. What my increased scoring does is keep him from roving as much, and it stops him from going exclusively to the double team." John Bagley had his most intensive workouts after the team returned from New York... "The knee feels better," he reported. "Whatever happens, I just am anxious to get back out there and start putting my game back together again." Bagley and Charles Smith were placed on Injured Reserve one day before the season opened, November 2...

Time Out For Trivia

The NBA Draft is always the focus of media attention. How well do you remember the number one picks over the past 20 years?

Year	College	Team	Year	College	Team
1971	Notre Dame	Cleveland	1981	DePaul	Dallas
1972	Loyola	Portland	1982	North Carolina	Los Angeles
1973	Illinois State	Philadelphia	1983	Virginia	Houston
1974	UCLA	Portland	1984	Houston	Houston
1975	NC State	Atlanta	1985	Georgetown	New York
1976	Maryland	Houston	1986	North Carolina	Cleveland
1977	Indiana	Milwaukee	1987	Navy	San Antonio
1978	Minnesota	Portland	1988	Kansas	LA Clippers
1979	Michigan St.	Los Angeles	1989	Louisville	Sacramento
1980	Purdue	Golden State	1990	Syracuse	New Jersey

Answers: 1971: Austin Carr. 1972: LaRue Martin. 1973: Doug Collins. 1974: Bill Walton. 1975: David Thompson. 1976: John Lucas. 1977: Kent Benson. 1978: Mychal Thompson. 1979: Earvin Johnson. 1980: Joe Barry. 1981: Mark Aguirre. 1982: James Worthy. 1983: Ralph Sampson. 1984: Akeem Olatunwo. 1985: Patrick Ewing. 1986: Brad Daugherty. 1987: Danny Manning. 1988: David Robinson. 1989: Pervis Ellison. 1990: Derrick Coleman.



1990-91 Boston Celtics Schedule

November — 1990

Fri. 2	—	H	Cleveland	7:30
Sat. 3	—	A	New York	7:30
Tue. 6	—	A	Chicago	7:00
Fri. 9	—	H	Chicago	7:30
Sat. 10	—	A	New Jersey	7:30
Tue. 13	—	A	Milwaukee	7:30
Wed. 14	—	H	Charlotte	7:30
Fri. 16	—	H	Utah	7:30
Sat. 17	—	A	Washington	7:30
Wed. 21	—	H	Houston	7:30
Fri. 23	—	H	Sacramento	7:30
Sat. 24	—	A	Cleveland	7:30
Mon. 26	—	*	Miami	7:30
Wed. 28	—	H	Atlanta	7:30
Fri. 30	—	H	Washington	7:30

December — 1990

Sat. 1	—	A	Philadelphia	7:30
Mon. 3	—	H	Seattle	7:30
Wed. 5	—	H	Denver	7:30
Fri. 7	—	A	Dallas	7:00
Sat. 8	—	A	San Antonio	7:30
Mon. 10	—	A	Houston	7:30
Wed. 12	—	H	Milwaukee	7:30
Fri. 14	—	H	Detroit	8:00
Sat. 15	—	A	Miami	7:30
Wed. 19	—	H	Philadelphia	7:30
Thu. 20	—	A	Charlotte	7:30
Wed. 26	—	H	Indiana	7:30
Fri. 28	—	A	Atlanta	8:00

January — 1991

Wed. 2	—	H	New York	8:00
Fri. 4	—	H	Phoenix	7:30
Sun. 6	—	H	Dallas	7:30
Tue. 8	—	A	New York	7:30
Wed. 9	—	H	Milwaukee	7:30
Fri. 11	—	H	LA Clippers	7:30
Sat. 12	—	A	Washington	7:30
Wed. 16	—	H	Golden State	7:30
Fri. 18	—	H	New Jersey	7:30
Mon. 21	—	A	Detroit	7:30
Wed. 23	—	H	Detroit	8:00
Fri. 25	—	A	Philadelphia	7:30
Sun. 27	—	H	LA Lakers	12:30
Mon. 28	—	A	Minnesota	7:00
Wed. 30	—	H	Orlando	7:30

February — 1991

Fri. 1	—	A	Charlotte	7:30
Sun. 3	—	H	Washington	1:00
Wed. 6	—	H	Charlotte	7:30
Thu. 7	—	A	New York	7:30
Tue. 12	—	A	Seattle	7:00
Thu. 14	—	A	Golden State	7:30
Fri. 15	—	A	LA Lakers	7:30
Sun. 17	—	A	Denver	2:00
Tue. 19	—	A	Phoenix	6:00
Fri. 22	—	*	New Jersey	7:30
Sun. 24	—	A	Indiana	1:00
Tue. 26	—	A	Chicago	7:30
Wed. 27	—	H	Minnesota	7:30

March — 1991

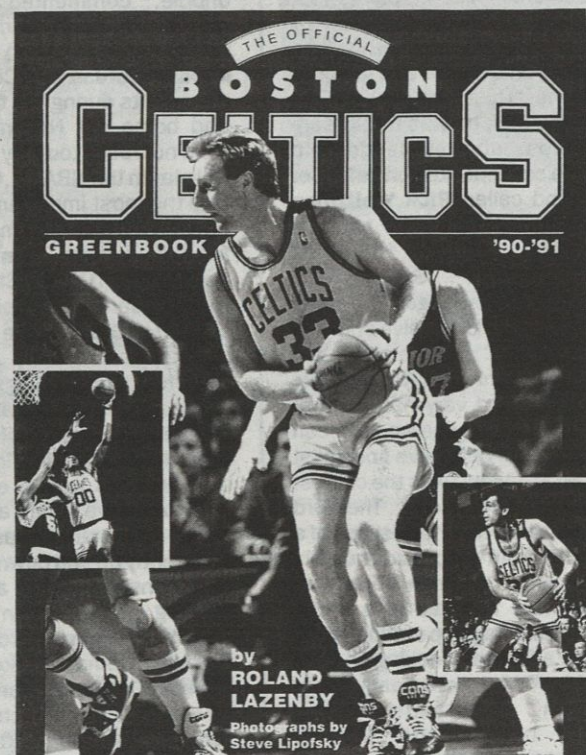
Fri. 1	—	H	San Antonio	8:00
Sun. 3	—	H	Portland	TBA
Mon. 4	—	*	Indiana	7:30
Wed. 6	—	H	Miami	7:30
Fri. 8	—	A	LA Clippers	7:30
Sun. 10	—	A	Portland	7:00
Tue. 12	—	A	Sacramento	7:30
Wed. 13	—	A	Utah	7:00
Fri. 15	—	A	Washington	8:00
Sun. 17	—	H	Philadelphia	12:00
Tue. 19	—	A	Atlanta	8:00
Wed. 20	—	H	Washington	7:30
Fri. 22	—	A	Indiana	7:30
Thu. 28	—	A	Miami	7:30
Fri. 29	—	H	Cleveland	8:00
Sun. 31	—	H	Chicago	12:30

April — 1991

Tue. 2	—	A	New Jersey	7:30
Thu. 4	—	H	New Jersey	7:30
Sat. 6	—	A	Orlando	7:30
Thu. 11	—	A	Milwaukee	7:30
Fri. 12	—	H	Miami	7:30
Sun. 14	—	H	New York	1:00
Tue. 16	—	A	Detroit	7:30
Thu. 18	—	A	Philadelphia	7:30
Fri. 19	—	A	Cleveland	8:00
Sun. 21	—	H	Atlanta	1:00

* — An asterisk denotes a home game in Hartford, CT. All games on WEEI (590 AM) radio. All times are local times, and are all "PM."

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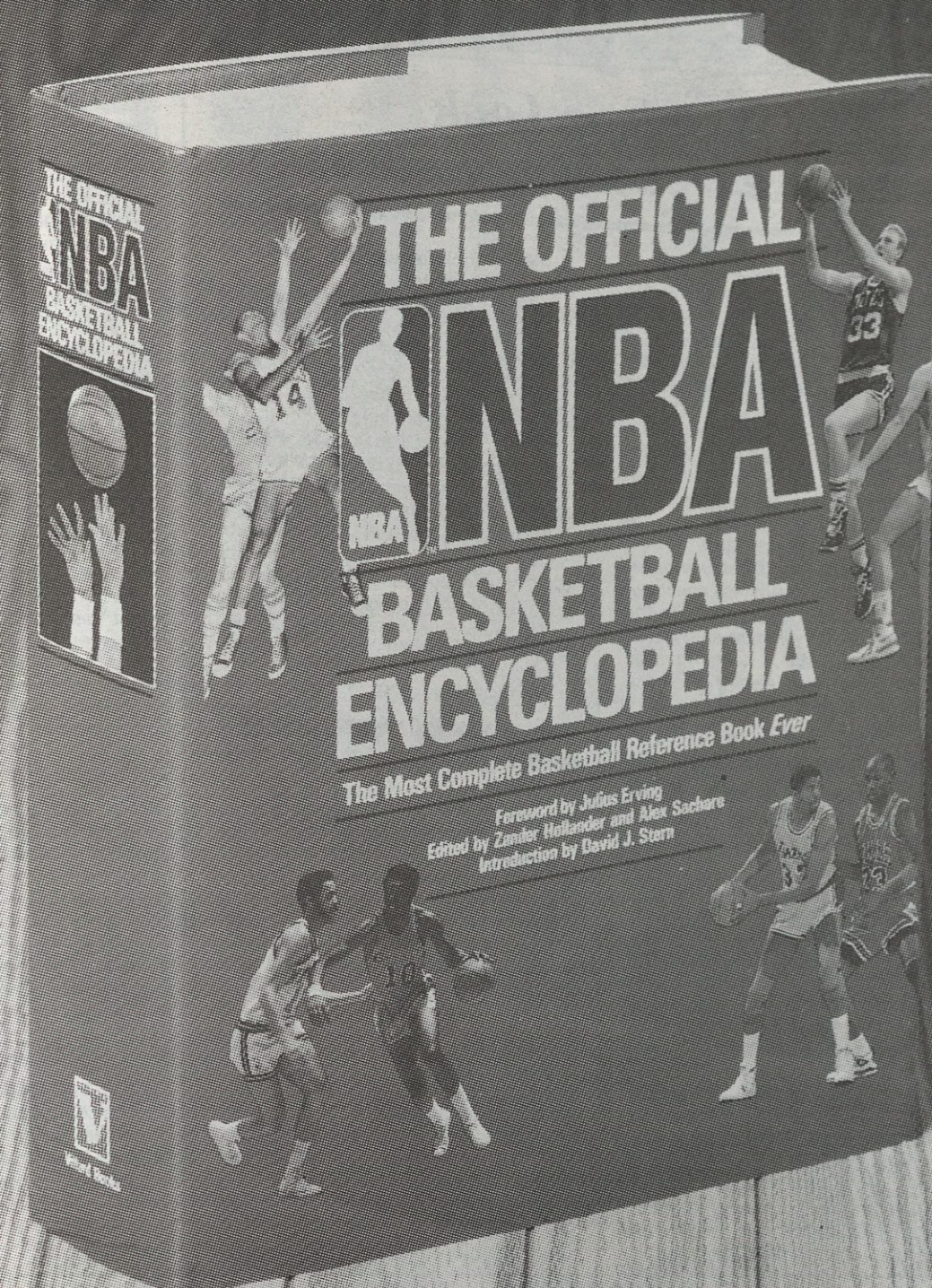
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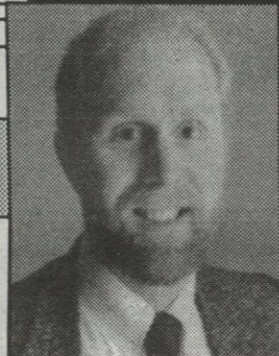
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A Unique Look At The Upcoming Season

Aright. Yes. The new season is out of the gates. There is nothing but optimism here in Boston where the adjectives old, tired and slow no longer apply. The pre-season showed that a new era is dawning in the Celtics house. Chris Ford is here, Dave Gavitt is here, Dee Brown is here, Brian Shaw is here, Reggie Lewis is here and for all this, there is reason to smile.

Larry, Robert and Kevin keep us nicely tied to the 80s... note the word nicely... because we aren't ready to turn in the best frontcourt of the last decade. But a torch is being passed here. The watchword is run. There are legs to make it go and there is a city full of fans waiting to cheer the race.

I plan to have plenty to say about this fascinating collection for the rest of this season. But when a new season starts, one of my favorite pastimes is to glance around the league and see who has joined new teams, which teams look tough, and what will mark the 90-91 season as uniquely different from all those that came before.

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

There is no doubt that the Celtics have the best talent in this strange group. Some may say it is the weakest of all the divisions... maybe so, but it is ours.

The New York Knicks summoned the strength to paste three in a row on the Celtics last spring. But my gut tells me that they were as surprised at what they did as their opponents and their opponents' fans. Patrick Ewing is still a dominating player, but he has little support beyond Charles Oakley, an erratic player at best. The Knicks

seemed to get stuck in the mud in the off-season and though I'll always admire Mo Cheeks, I doubt he can carry this club all season. The best thing that happened in NY is that the Knicks let Johnny Newman, a long-time Celtics nemesis, slip away to Charlotte.

Philadelphia 76'ers. You gotta love Charles Oakley. He brings a joy to the NBA that is worth the price of admission. But last season's overachievers may find the road tougher this year. Brian Oliver will help them and the future Manute Bol is the man who fell to earth. He and Barkley form the unlikely duo since Pruneface and Itchy. This is the team to grab tickets for in the cold, cold winter. They'll warm your hearts.

Collectively, the Miami Heat, Washington Bullets, and New Jersey Nets make one talented squad. Separately, they are not only bad, but boring.

Central Division

The Chicago Bulls are ready to explode. For the past three years they've been a can of Pepsi, shaken up, but not allowed to burst open. I'll be the first to say that they can get past Detroit this year. The magnificent Michael has lots of help in Stacey King, B.J. Armstrong, Scottie Pippen and the rest. The addition of an underachieving Dennis Hopson (liberated at last from the Nets) and Cliff Livingston make the Bulls even stronger and deeper. Watch out Windy City.

As a charter member of the I Hate the Pistons Club, I will have to move to Costa Rica if these jerks win another crown. Yeah, yeah, they are good. And Joe Dumars is a classy guy. But Big Baby Bill and Little Baby Isaiah are too sickening to watch anymore. Let's all root, root, root for the Bulls to dethrone the Bad Boys and let

Detroit go back to being just another unpleasant midwestern city.

As much as I dislike the Pistons, I like the Cleveland Cavaliers. So why did they give up a superstar like Ron Harper for an unknown like Danny Ferry? Don't know. But after a dismal pre-season, Ferry is hearing lots of murmuring around Lake Erie that he ain't worth \$3 million a year. He was projected another Larry Bird but he's turning out to be another Kent Benson. Cleveland is tough anyway, but not tough enough in that madhouse division. Indiana keeps looking great on paper and then finishing 42-42. So I'm not going to toot their horn again this year. And admit it, aren't you glad to see Sidney Moncrief playing again, even if it's in Atlanta?

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

Mr. Robinson's neighborhood. Can you say NBA title? Watch out America, this guy is for real and management in San Antonio has put together the right supporting cast. The 90s may just be singing a Texas tune in the NBA because this team is downright scary.

David Robinson, Sean Elliott, Terry Cummings, Willie Anderson and Rod Strickland and fast, big, tough, and reallllll good. Add a savvy veteran like Paul Pressey from the Bucks and you've got the makings of a contender.

But don't get too excited little lady, because down yonder in Dallas, things may just be looking up as well. You lose Sam Perkins (big deal) but you add Alex English, Fat Lever, Rodney McCray and rookie Phil Henderson to a cast of Rolando Blackman, Derek Harper and Roy Tarpley and this group can boogie. So much de-

pends on Tarpley's head, of course.

And if Roy doesn't cut it, you can certainly expect heavy metal from Utah, which has made losing in the first round of the play-offs an art form. But the Jazz added another Malone, Jeff, from Washington, and he gives them a shooting guard they have lacked. John Stockton may end up with 50 assists some night with the two Malones out there.

The only other noteworthy item in this division is that the pathetic Orlando Magic made one major move other than bringing in rookie Dennis Scott. They signed free agent Greg Kite from Sacramento. Nuff said.

Pacific Division

To me, this is the best division to watch on TV. The Lakers are still the Lakers and anybody writing them off right now is sniffing glue. Add Sam Perkins to this cast and suddenly Sam sizzles. Elden Campbell can also help this team even though he sometimes played in college as if he were imitating CBS slo-mo replay.

But Portland and Phoenix, the two teams most Easterners mistake for each other, are emerging as the future of this division. Add Danny Ainge to that Portland cast and it makes you shudder. Good for Danny to escape Sacramento purgatory for a chance to play for a champion.

And Phoenix is for real. They ousted the Lakers in the last year's play-offs and they are now a regular soap opera: The Young and the Restless. And by the way, if I hear one more time how Tom Chambers is a big stiff, I'm gonna scream. This guy is one tough NBA star and if you watch him enough, you don't need any further explanation.

Don't rule out a challenge from the Clippers. If you keep adding top draft choices to a pie, you'll soon have a mighty good pie or you have to leave the kitchen. If you can figure out those mixed metaphors, than you'll also believe that Benoit Benjamin is a championship center.

The serious hoop fan's prediction: Look for a Chicago — San Antonio final with Mr. Robinson wearing the crown.

The Celtic's fan's prediction: Look for a Celtics — San Antonio final with Larry stomping on yet another Texas team for his first title of the 90s.

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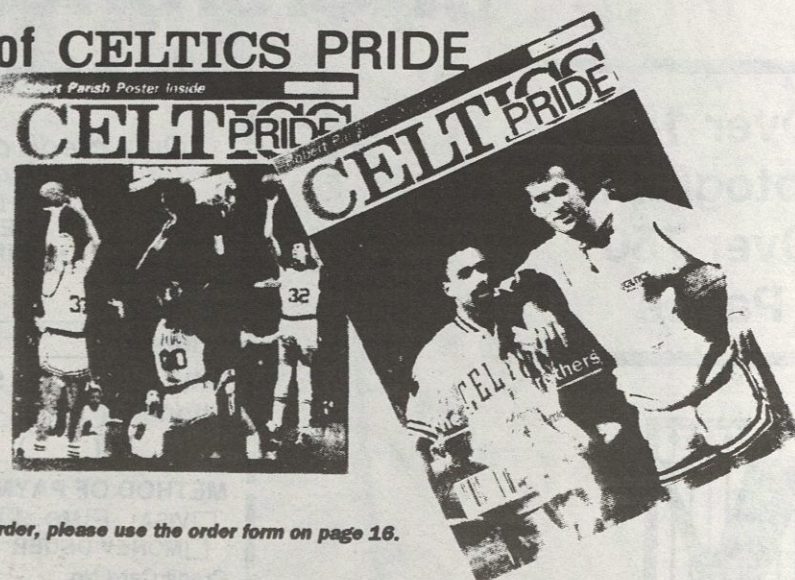
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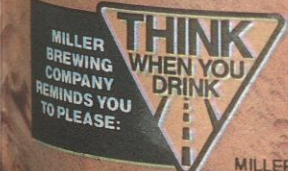
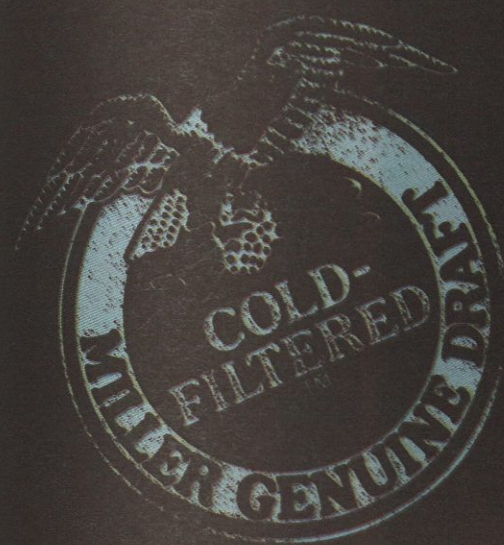
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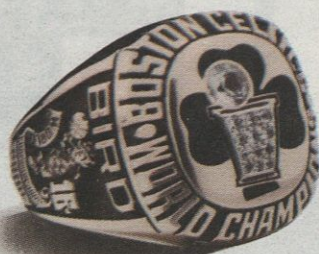
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